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DRAGON™

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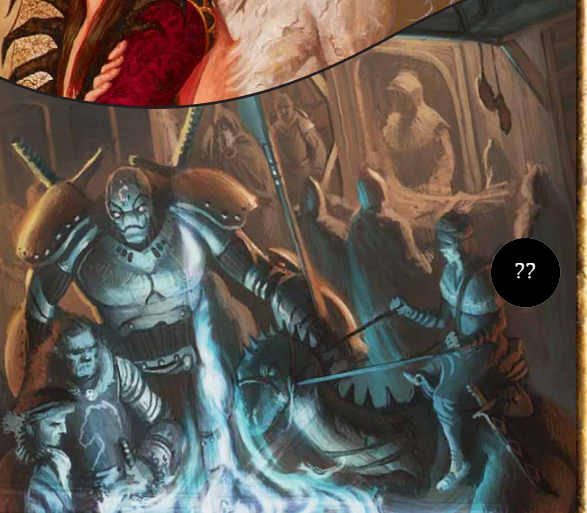

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Birth of the Cool

One of the best parts about working on *Dragon* is that each month—heck, each day, is completely different. And each month is more exciting, hectic, and invigorating than the one before.

This month, we get to unveil the barbarian, probably one of the classes people were most interested in seeing. As one of my favorite 3rd Edition classes (especially for that sweet, sweet one-level dip—ah, broken 3E min-max multiclassing), I was especially excited to see what our design team had cooked up. I have not been disappointed.

I love the concepts behind the primal power source, for one. I mean, check out this month's cover. How bad-ass is that dragon shape forming around the raging dragonborn barbarian? If you didn't see that and think, "That's my next character," get your pulse checked!

Which brings up the real point this month: new characters. I don't think there's a better new toy for a D&D player than a new class. I don't know about you, but a new class is just an excuse to hit the books and start character building. It's one of my favorite away-from-the-table activities. You get to come up with a new character concept, plan out your first few levels (or if you're a freak like me, all 30), think about killer combos (both within your class, and within your party), and make that all-important wish list of magic items that would be oh-so-perfect for your new PC. If I played a game for each character I've created, I honestly don't think I'd ever sleep again.

In many ways, unwrapping your new class and building that new character is a microcosm of what makes D&D so much fun in the first place. I mean, this is, at its heart, a game of discovery. You explore a new world, chock full of unknown dangers, guided by a story set in motion by your DM and carried to completion by you and all your fellow players. But it all starts with creating your character, which is a voyage of discovery all its own. Each time you build a character, you're unveiling uncharted regions of the game. To me, it's almost like a unique type of solo adventure.

You start with your class—in my optimal case, one that's entirely new. You've never been there before, and that's just like your character standing at the entrance to an unplumbed tomb, filled with danger and the unknown.

At this point, this is all you've got, and the anxiety of what lies ahead. But just as your character at the dungeon door shouldn't worry about the encounter four rooms ahead, don't think about which feats you'll take ... yet. Class is the toughest choice, but followed closely by your choice of race. This is your first crossroads in the dungeon. If you go in any direction, you'll certainly end up somewhere. But one way leads to the place where race and class intersect to give you the most possible fun. The important thing to remember is that your best choice might not be the most optimal from the perspective of the rules. Sometimes a choice the power gamer dubs "suboptimal" will be the most fun. For each player the requirements differ.

From there, you're mostly on safe ground, since respecting is possible with your characters, but not in the dungeon. It's too bad, too. I can think of several instances where an "Undo!" button would have been handy on an adventure.

The best part, to me at least, is the backstory. This is my chance to potentially contribute in some unique, lasting way to the campaign. I always sit down with my DM here, and pick his brain for little campaign details that haven't come up in play yet—and you know DMs are itching to unload some of this stuff. Find out about the organizations you haven't interacted with yet, or the uncharted corners of the world your characters haven't explored, and see if there's an angle there for your character. I like to tie my new creation directly to the world—in effect, crossing the streams of character creation with world exploration—thereby giving my DM incentive to populate the campaign with adventure hooks that will feel personal down the road.

All right, enough talk. Enjoy the barbarian, and all the other great content in this issue. Me? I'm off to reminisce about Uncas, the last pure barbarian I played, then I'm going to roll up my brand-new barbarian. Hmmm ... dwarf barbarian? Or maybe the warforged...

Backdrop Graywall

by Keith Baker

illustrations by Rob Alexander, Jason A. Engle, and David Griffith

DROAAM, one of the strangest places on Khorvaire, is a land of monsters that serves as a home to medusas and minotaurs. Gargoyles and wyverns circle in the skies, and goblins and werewolves lurk in the forests. For centuries it has been an untamed frontier. Then the Daughters of Sora Kell forged it into a nation. Few in the outer world expected this monstrous alliance to survive a year, but it has endured for over a decade. Towns are rising in the wastelands, built with the strength of giants and the cunning stonework of the medusas. One such town lies on the border of Droaam and Breland, carved from the foothills of the mountains from which it takes its name. This is Graywall, town of monsters and gateway to Droaam.

Why Come to Graywall?

Though smaller than Sharn or Stormreach, Graywall is a unique town with much to offer to adventurers.

A Free Town: Not only is Droaam not one of the Five Nations—it isn't even bound by the Treaty of Thronehold. As such, the laws of the east have no weight here, making it a haven for bandits, deserters, and all manner of war criminals. Free from the Code of Galifar, it is also a source for dangerous goods banned in the eastern lands, from mystical narcotics to surplus weapons of war smuggled from Aundair or Breland. Adventurers might have to pry a fugitive out from the town of monsters, prevent an agent of the Emerald Claw from making an deal for arcane armaments, or find a shady fence to make their own lucrative bargain.

Ruins of Dhakaan: Droaam holds secrets still untouched by human hands. Ruins have lain empty since the Gatekeepers drove the daelkyr into the depths . . . along with other dungeons held by monstrous forces—natural, aberrant, and undead. Graywall can make an excellent base of operations for adventurers searching for the secrets of the Age of Monsters.

Home, Unsavory Home: In 4th edition, many monstrous races make excellent player characters. Minotaurs, gnolls, kobolds, goblinoids, and orcs are all covered in the 4th edition Monster Manual, and doppelgangers and tieflings have an easier time in Droaam than they do in the civilized nations.

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If a group chooses to play a fully monstrous party, Graywall might be their home town and base of operations, from which they explore Dhakaani ruins, clash with Brelish border guards, and get drawn into the intrigues of Droaam's many warlords. Alternatively, the minotaur who now wanders across Khorvaire with his human comrades might still remember Graywall as his home, and be drawn back when an old enemy strikes his clan. And if the PCs are convicted of a crime they didn't commit, Graywall can prove a safe (if unsavory) home.

Life in Graywall

Droaam is a young nation. Just 30 years ago, Graywall was a broken mass of Dhakaani ruins. In the intervening decades, a nation has taken root in the wilderness, and Graywall has become the frontier between the realms of humanity and the land of monsters. During the Last War it became a staging ground for monstrous forces, both those serving as mercenaries with House Tharashk and the warbands raiding Breland. With the war's end, the Daughters of Sora Kell have devoted significant resources to establishing a strong presence on the border of the Five Nations. As a result, Graywall is a booming town. The expansion never ends, since teams of ogres, orcs, and medusas work on new barracks and reinforce the fortress walls. Ogres quarry and shift stone, while kobolds and goblins delve in the byeshk mines and toil in the workhouses and fields. Gnoll hunters bring hides and meat in from the surrounding wilds. And then there are the people of the east—bandits, deserters, merchants, and more, all looking for opportunities.

The majority of the monsters that live in Graywall are in the employ of the Daughters of Sora Kell. The rewards for this service are food, shelter, and a sense of pride, along with rations of bitter grog. It's a hard life, but better than many of them would have had decades ago—especially for the goblins, who were typically subjugated by more powerful creatures. In recent years foreigners have brought the gold of Galifar to the town, giving birth both to services catering to the outlanders . . . and to criminals who prey upon them.

Common Customs

Most of the monstrous inhabitants of Graywall serve Droaam. Sora Katra strives to inspire her people, so that they want to work to create a stronger Droaam—but where inspiration fails, force is employed. Every work crew has two overseers, a minotaur and a harpy. The minotaur serves as the iron fist when brute force is employed. The harpy calls the team to work and entertains them with her song whenever they are granted a period of rest. A harpy overseer uses the standard harpy statistics, but replaces Stealth with Diplomacy +12 and Insight +10. A minotaur overseer might be a soldier or cabalist depending on the group he is minding; either way he receives a +3 bonus to Intimidate checks. A laborer typically serves an 11-hour work shift and engages in an hour of militia drills. Given the choice, most of the inhabitants of the town are nocturnal; however, the work yards and mines run 24 hours a day.

Although the citizens of Droaam are theoretically equal, centuries of tradition and bloodshed have ingrained certain habits in the population. On the streets, monsters typically defer to more powerful creatures, and most citizens have a good sense of this hierarchy. The goblin steps out of the way of the ogre, and the ogre steps aside for the troll. Frequently this breaks down to size, but there are definite exceptions to this rule. Even a troll steps out of a medusa's path.

People of the Five Nations might find the casual presence of deadly creatures to be unnerving. Although they are relatively rare, medusas walk the streets of Graywall. A female medusa keeps her eyes closed, observing the world through her serpent mane; lacking this option, a male medusa typically ties a strip of gauze loosely across his eyes to protect others from his deadly gaze. But it is easy enough for an angry medusa to pull away the gauze, or for a harpy to raise her voice. In practice, this rarely occurs; Xorchylic has no patience for monsters that kill without reason, and the people of Droaam know better than to provoke their deadly fellow citizens. A medusa can kill with a gaze, just as a wizard in Sharn could fling a fireball into a crowd. But neither is likely to do so unless provoked.

Religion

Though united under the Daughters of Sora Kell, the creatures of Droaam have wildly diverse cultures. The medusas of Cazhaak Draal have sent envoys to Graywall, but in the past they have had infrequent contact with the tieflings of the Venomous Demesne or the gnolls of the Znir Pact. As a result, little religious solidarity exists in Graywall. A host of tiny shrines are scattered throughout Bloodstone and Little Graywall, and they represent the deities of different clans and races. The minotaurs of the north are united in worship of the Horned Prince, but each clan has their own representation of this demon overlord and believes all others to be flawed. The Last Dirge harpies revere the Song of Passion and Rage—an interpretation of the Fury—while the Stormsinger harpies venerate the Stormsong, an aspect of the Devourer. The asymmetric icons of the Traveler hold hidden messages for doppelgangers who pass through Graywall. The Znir gnolls worship no deity or demon, instead raising piles of stones to reflect the idols shattered by their ancestors.

Although each group has their own personal patrons and beliefs, a few forces are respected throughout the nation. The greatest of these is the Shadow. The priests of the Shadow are typically

Graywall

Built atop ancient goblin ruins, this town marks the border between Droaam and Breland. Teams of goblins and ogres work ceaselessly to expand the town and its walls.

Population: 5,800; roughly 500 additional laborers are camped in the Stone Pits. Traders, travelers, and Droaamish troops pass through Graywall on a regular basis. The bulk of the population is goblins, orcs, gnolls, shifters, and ogres, but a vast array of creatures live in the town, including minotaurs, gargoyles, harpies, doppelgangers, lycanthropes, oni, and medusas. Humans, half-orcs, dwarves, and members of the other races are largely concentrated in the Calabas; those who live in Bloodstone are largely bandits or fugitives.

Government: The mind flayer Xorchylic is the governor of Graywall, and it holds the power of life and death over its inhabitants. Baron Kundran Torrn of House Tharashk has been granted the right to administer justice in the Calabas.

Defense: The Flayer Guard is both a peacekeeping force and a well-disciplined and well-equipped military unit that is among the best Droaam can field. In addition to the 300 soldiers of the Flayer Guard, the gnolls of the Znir Pact keep 100 troops garrisoned in the town, and Xorchylic can call in the Pact as needed. Although it has the trappings of a border town, Graywall is also a military outpost that stands ready to defend the pass against Brelish aggression . . . or to launch a raid, if it comes to that. As such, all members of the labor force undergo basic militia training and can take up arms if necessary. In comparison to the Flayer Guard, this militia is poorly organized and has limited equipment, but the natural abilities of the creatures still make it a force with which to be reckoned.

medusas or oni, and they teach that the Shadow created the monstrous races, granting his children powers that Aureon and the selfish Sovereigns withheld from humanity. So far the Voices of the Shadow have largely supported the Daughters of Sora Kell, and these priests frequently serve as community leaders.

The Mockery is also revered by monsters of many species, but his followers are more aggressive. Priests of the Mockery frequently incite violence against the people of the east, and woe betide the foreigner who encounters a pack of Skinners at midnight in Bloodstone.

Most of the creatures of Droaam are indifferent toward the Sovereign Host and their worshipers. They consider the Sovereigns to be weak and selfish gods, and see their worship as more laughable than offensive. The Silver Flame is another story. Champions and crusaders of the Silver Flame have frequently invaded Droaam over the last four centuries, and the people of Graywall have no intention of forgiving these old trespasses. Anyone who openly wears a symbol of the Silver Flame is met with great hostility. Outside the Calabas, this dramatically increases the chance of street violence. Even if nobody attacks him, the PC take a –5 penalty to skill checks or challenges involving Diplomacy or Streetwise, and any perceived allies of his take a –3 penalty to these checks because of the association.

Law and Order

Droaam stands outside the Code of Galifar and the Treaty of Galifar. There is no uniform code of justice in Droaam; instead, the law lies solely in the hands of the designated representatives of the Daughters of Sora Kell. In Droaam, this is Xorchylic, an ancient mind flayer. Xorchylic personally commands the Flayer Guard, a force of ogres, orcs, and minotaurs supplemented by harpies, gargoyles, and a squad of war trolls trained by Sora Maenya. Xorchylic can also call on the mercenary gnolls of the Znir Pact, as well his allies within House Tharashk.

At the end of the day, Graywall is a frontier town. PCs can get away with a lot, as long as they don't do anything that directly inconveniences Xorchylic. This is especially true when the crime targets a foreigner. Xorchylic doesn't recognize the laws of other lands and won't punish Brelish bandits who take sanctuary in his town. But neither will he call on his guards to protect them if someone comes looking for them . . . unless, of course, the newcomers somehow become a threat to Xorchylic. Serious crimes are punished with immediate execution. For lesser crimes, a victim is branded and then sent to the arena for a period of time based on the crime. Should he survive the duration of his sentence, he is free to go. It's said that Xorchylic sometimes uses his mental powers to punish offenders; some say he implants phobias or psychoses, but this might simply be rumor.

Although there are no written laws, the people of Graywall do have the right to bring grievances before a medusa magistrate. If the magistrate considers the case to be frivolous, she turns her gaze on the plaintiff. As a result, the caseload is light—but many of the weaker creatures take pleasure in the idea that they have a voice.

Xorchylic has granted House Tharashk the right to prosecute crimes committed in the Calabas. Baron Kundran Torrn of House Tharashk can call on the

forces of his own house, including a substantial force of orc soldiers, for this purpose; he also employs ogre, gargoyle, and gnoll mercenaries. He acts if a crime directly threatens the stability of the Calabas. Otherwise, he takes action only if it can be conclusively proven that a crime has occurred, which requires the plaintiff to employ the services of Tharashk inquisitives. So justice is available within the confines of the Calabas, but it comes at a price.

The Economy

The Daughters of Sora Kell have yet to mint coins. Most merchants willingly accept the gold of the east, especially in the Calabas; however, they are also used to bartering for goods and services. Gnoll hunters trade food and meat. Miners might offer slivers of precious metal or rough, low-value gemstones. Another common token of value is the tooth of a dangerous animal. The Daughters offer a bounty on feral creatures that pose a threat to travel and trade, and they reward hunters for turning in the teeth of kills; as a result, teeth have become a form of currency. A common practice is to inscribe the type of creature on the tooth in either Giant or Goblin, but most merchants don't accept teeth for barter unless they personally recognize the beast.

As a DM, consider the bartering system of Droaam's markets as an opportunity to plant adventure hooks. Although a merchant in Bloodstone might be willing to accept gold for his goods, odds are high that he has little gold with which to purchase treasures from adventurers. However, he could offer an ancient Dhakaani statue that the group's historian thinks is worth considerably more than what they have to trade—although to receive its full value, they have to travel to Darguun! Merchants could offer maps leading to fabled ruins, scrolls of Dhakaani lore, or strange relics of the Daelkyr that have never been identified. They might also possess relics from the Last War, which were goods pawned by or stolen from soldiers of the Five Nations. This could be a source of treasures the PCs couldn't acquire in a dungeon, or it could set the stage for a story. For instance, a widow wants to recover a family heirloom lost by a soldier last seen in Graywall. As a result, the markets of Graywall might have surprising opportunities for even high-level characters. The oni merchant might not have the gold to deal with a paragon-level PC—but it might have treasures the PCs want.

Droaam's primary export is byeshk ore. However, people frequently come to Droaam to deal in less savory goods. Bandits—both monstrous raiders and Brelish deserters—sell their spoils in the goblin markets. Droaam is also the source of a variety of potent alchemical substances; however, all these are addictive and carry side effects severe enough that wise PCs avoid them. Dragon's blood enhances arcane powers, but carries the risk of burning out a caster from within. Courage is a stimulant that helps the user overcome fear, a useful thing in a town of monsters . . . but over time it promotes paranoia, ultimately leaving the user in a catatonic state of sheer terror. Blood gin is a powerful necrotic narcotic. The berries used to give blood gin its flavor and potency must be steeped in the blood of a murdered sentient being, and those who drink the gin have visions drawn from the life of the victim, mixed in with the overall euphoria and lassitude imparted by the drug. Withdrawal symptoms include hallucinations and nightmares, frequently involving the circumstances of the original victim's murder. Traffic in all these substances is illegal in the Five Nations, but expatriates and exiles have become addicted to blood gin, and the criminal organization Daask has opened a few hidden gin dens in Breland and Aundair.

Entertainment

Beyond the Calabas, the people of Graywall are largely given over to simple pleasures. Many enjoy a good brawl, whether a simple wrestling match in the street, a prize fight in a tavern, or a battle royale in the arena. Other forms of entertainment vary by species. Goblins enjoy song and music. The changelings of Graywall practice a form of dance that incorporates their shapeshifting abilities. Ogres love tests of strength and endurance, and adventurers wandering through Bloodstone might come upon a group of ogres holding massive stones over their heads. Although few citizens have gold, many love to gamble, and it's common to see teeth or other bartering tokens scattered on the ground around an impromptu match.

In addition to grog, many of the monsters of Graywall partake of an unusual intoxicant: harpy song. This is provided as a public service in the grist mills where laborers go in their off hours, and most public houses also have a "songbird." When performing in this capacity, a harpy rarely engages the fully stupefying effect of her voice; nonetheless, her songs possess a hypnotic beauty. Harpy songbirds typically possess Diplomacy +12 and Insight +10.

Food and Drink

An expatriate from the east can find familiar foods in the inns and taverns of the Calabas. If he ventures into Bloodstone or the other districts of Graywall, he can find more disturbing fare. Most of it is perfectly edible, though many Droaamites like their meat to be squirming. Other dishes are incompatible with the human digestive tract. Trolls like to chew dried carrion crawler tendrils, which can paralyze a typical human. Many dishes are also served with a tiny ooze, which is swallowed to help digestion. However, stories have circulated that tell of poorly prepared oozes eating their way out of a diner's stomach.

The Daughters of Sora Kell provide their laborers with basic sustenance, which is served at dining halls known as "grist mills." This name is drawn from the primary dish—a form of ground meat called grist, prepared in stew, pie, or sausage form. Grist is tough and has a sour taste that dwarves find especially offensive, but it is filling and the mills have a seemingly endless supply. Few laborers have any idea where grist comes from, and of those who do, few care; however, it might disturb visitors. Grist is ground troll meat. Each mill includes a stable of imprisoned trolls. Some have been bred for this purpose; others are being punished for incompetence; and some have chosen to make this sacrifice for their nation. Flesh is stripped away, slowly enough to ensure that the troll can regenerate from the loss without serious harm (though the pain is agonizing). Troll meat contains a number of minor toxins that normally render it inedible. However, the Daughters of Sora Kell possess the answer to this dilemma. A secret blend of herbs and spices is mixed in with the meat as it is ground up, and this counteracts the nauseating effects . . . though adventurers might still be revolted when they learn what they are eating.

The Shape of Graywall

Ten thousand years ago, the Dhakaani goblins built a fortress to defend the valley between the Graywall Mountains and the Byeshk Mountains. Droaam was a land of monsters even then, and while the Dhakaani built a number of cities past the Graywall, they wanted to be sure they could hold the gate. During the Xoriat Incursion, the fortress of Korash Khaar stood strong for years of battle. Then the daelkyr took to the field of battle. Dyrrn the Corruptor came to Korash Khaar, and the fortress fell before him. Some say the fortress walls absorbed the guardians, and that this accounts for the blood-red coloring of the remaining stones. Whatever the truth of the matter, Korash Khaar was no more, and the pass was abandoned.

Over the course of millennia, many different groups took shelter in the ruins of Korash Khaar. Savage goblins fought over the bloodstained stones. The goblins were driven out by gnolls, who in turn lost the land to ogres and oni during the Borunan Exodus. The ogres abandoned it, and the tales of this time speak of ruddy gargoyles emerging from the stone and a darkness rising from beneath the town. Following this, the haunted ruins were shunned . . . until the coming of the Daughters of Sora Kell. The tales say that it was Sora Teraza who found Xorchylic, who had been bound beneath Korash Khaar thousands of years earlier. The project was entrusted to the mind flayer, and he was given an army with which to work. A number of the old goblin buildings were restored, while others were stripped for their stone and rebuilt. Quarries were quickly established, and ogres hauled great blocks of stone to feed the appetite of the growing town.

Architecture and Appearance

Graywall is a town built with the strength of ogres, designed by the shared vision of Xorchylic and the medusa masons of Cazhaak Draal. Most buildings are functional structures of bare granite. But as one walks past the plain stone, it appears to ripple and flow in peripheral vision—the result of strange textures designed by Xorchylic. This subliminal patterning produces a noticeable emotional response in sentient beings. A traveler finds that she feels a slight touch of dread when she steps into an alley, while the open square feels pleasant and peaceful. Locations are identified by simple, iconic images; many of the inhabitants of Graywall cannot read, and only the basic icons work for the more dimwitted residents.

Graywall is built atop a network of tunnels, and many buildings have at least one level that lies underground. Some of these subterranean passages connect all the way to the region known as Khyras, but these passages are typically warded or blocked off; nonetheless, a group of adventurers might find a hidden passage to the Deep Door, or break into a building by coming up from Khyras.

Most of Graywall is designed to accommodate monsters of all shapes and sizes. The arch of a doorway is large enough for a troll to step through without squeezing. Some buildings have a second door for goblins or kobolds; others place a hatch in the main door, with a leather curtain draped down to keep out the weather. Any sort of public room includes stools and chairs in a variety of sizes, as well as skins along the floor for larger creatures to sit upon. Public buildings are likely to have high ceilings and a few perches set up along the walls—posts for harpies and gargoyles.

Districts

Graywall is divided into four districts, along with two areas that are not part of the town but might play a role in adventures. The names include both the Goblin name and the Common translation; the first name is the one most commonly used.

Bloodstone (Sorghun)

Population: Bloodstone is the largest district and home to most of the Medium and Large inhabitants of the town—minotaurs, shifters, ogres, orcs not aligned with House Tharashk, and others. Bloodstone is also home to doppelgangers, tieflings, and a variety of bandits, deserters, and criminals from the eastern lands who have found refuge in Graywall.

Character: The district takes its name from the crimson coloring of the stone used in many of its buildings—stones recovered from the shattered walls of Korash Khaar. Bloodstone is the classic image of Graywall, with ogres and goblins rubbing shoulders with brigands and war criminals. It is a dangerous place for any foreigner who steps out of line. A troll doesn't necessarily pick a fight with an adventurer, but it won't turn one down, and the streets are full of monsters ready to join in a brawl.

Inns: The Hydra Halls; The Labyrinth.

Taverns: The Bloody Tooth; The Broken Sword; The Venomous Voice.

Supplies: Tooth and Steel.

Dragonmarked Services: None.

Temples: The Street of Shadows.

KEY LOCATIONS

Bloodstone is home to a variety of unsavory establishments; the following are merely a few of the more stable businesses.

The Arena: The people of Droaam love their blood sports, and battles take place in the arena every night. Combats include formal grudge matches, open melees, bounty battles with fierce beasts or condemned criminals, and trials for the soldiers of the Flayer Guard. One popular form of bounty battle is Six Stones, in which seven challengers are set in the arena with one or more basilisks; the combatants are not allowed to fight the basilisks or kill one another, and the contest continues until only one contestant remains. PCs who wish to fight in the arena can seek a sponsor who can get them into the ring for a share of the purse (level 4 skill challenge, complexity 1, primary skill: Streetwise). The two likely sponsors are Kel'Ashta, a Tharashk orc who monitors the arena for possible mercenary recruits; and Fela Fingerbones, a clever goblin rogue whose family has been spreading its roots into gambling activities across Graywall.

The Bloody Tooth: The Blood Tooth is a rough tavern; any disputes between patrons can be settled quickly in the challenge ring in the common room. The Bloody Tooth caters primarily to monstrous clientele, and humans and their ilk receive a cold welcome here.

The Broken Sword: A tavern catering to ex-soldiers of the eastern nations, the Broken Sword has Knights Arcane to Darguul chainmasters within it at any given moment. Located in Bloodstone, this tavern counts war criminals, brigands, and revolutionaries among its clients. A Cyran warforged named Maul serves as both bartender and bouncer; either he owns the tavern, or the true owner has chosen to remain anonymous. Patrons of the Broken Sword are expected to leave their national feuds outside. Within the Broken Sword, the Thrane paladin and Karrnathi bone knight are both exiles. The unwritten rule is that if anyone starts a fight in the Sword—especially a Sentinel Marshal or other bounty hunter—every patron lends a hand, acting to end the fight as quickly as possible.

Challenge Rings: The arena is the sight of grand battles, but no shortage of conflict exists throughout Graywall. Circles are scratched into the ground at many of the major intersections in Bloodstone. Most contain large chunks of stone, shards of broken statues, or patches of dried blood. A wide variety of challenges take place in these rings. Brawling and feats of strength are commonplace. Minotaurs engage in a form of wrestling in which the two combatants seek to push or shove the opponent out of the ring. Most of these are skill challenges involving Athletics, Endurance, or Acrobatics, but there are alternatives. A kobold duel is a match of insults and put-downs,

judged by the onlookers; such a challenge could use Insight, Intimidate, and Bluff to determine success.

The House of Worms: An injured gladiator who can't afford the services of House Jorasco can try his luck at the House of Worms in Bloodstone. The grizzled and ornery longtooth shifter who runs the hostel is known as Worms, due to his use of broodworms in treating infected wounds. Although his techniques are disturbing, Worms has a Heal skill of +15. Usually Worms can provide only mundane treatment, but he's always on the lookout for ritual scrolls, and at any given time he might assist with a ritual.

The Hydra Halls: Graywall is a young town that was built to house thousands. The Hydra Halls are mass dormitories, and each is virtually identical in layout and appearance to the others. The only distinctive feature of a hall is the unique icon painted above the main entrance. As such, an ogre knows that he lives in the Eye or the Claw. Most of the halls are assigned to specific work crews, but a few have rooms available for monstrous travelers on a barter basis. The halls are spread around the two enormous grist mills, where the laborers go for food, drink, and harpy song.

Jabra's: A distant relative of the Daughters of Sora Kell, the night hag Jabra is an alchemist of remarkable skill. In addition to selling traditional potions, she produces dragon's blood, blood gin, and other unusual and possibly dangerous elixirs. She also bottles dreams and nightmares, and for a sufficient price she could acquire the dreams of a specific individual for the PCs. Jabra's storefront is a simple tent, and she moves around Bloodstone on a daily basis, sometimes disappearing for days or weeks.

The Labyrinth: Built at the base of an old quarry, the Labyrinth is a literal hole in the ground. Its rooms are scattered throughout a maze of passages, making it the perfect home away from home for the fugitive who doesn't want to be found. A family of minotaurs owns the bar, and they take the privacy of their guests seriously. The average cost of a room is 2 gp per night, with a 10% discount for long-term rental. The price is high given the austere nature of the accommodations, but the Labyrinth caters to fugitives who have gold and need privacy.

The Skin Factory: Although laborers can eat a meal at a grist factory, no one likes grist. The Skin Factory is the name given to the collection of slaughterhouses, butchers, and tanners found on the edge of Bloodstone. The merchants of the Skin Factory are looking for fresh meat, and PCs who bring any kill to the district can get something more useful in trade, whether nuggets of precious metal or preserved rations for the road. The Skin Factory includes Horac's Hides, which is home to a family of orc tanners who make excellent leather and hide armor. Although most of their work is mundane, grandfather Gech learned tricks from an oni and can produce enchanted armor. A PC who earns the favor of the Horacs might be offered a unique piece designed by Gech.

The Street of Shadows: Shrines to demons and various faces of the Dark Six are scattered across Graywall, but the Street of Shadows is lined with them. From the cairns of the Znir gnolls to the horned idols of the minotaurs, there are dozens of icons and altars. The street ends at the Eye of the Shadow, a small windowless temple formed from black stone. The medusa priestess Zerasha holds court here. A fearsome combatant and skilled ritual caster, Zerasha is the most influential voice in Graywall after Xorchylic; the people of the town have come to trust her oracular gifts. At the moment, she is an ally of the Daughters of Sora Kell, but her first loyalty is to the Shadow and to her own warlord, the Queen of Stone. Should there ever be a civil war in Graywall, the black-scaled medusa will be a force with which to be reckoned.

Tooth and Steel: Members of the Flayer Guard are outfitted by the Karda Forge and the goblins of Little Graywall, but there are always customers for arms and armor in Droaam. Staffed largely by shifters and minotaurs, Tooth and Steel produces highly distinctive (albeit mundane) equipment in all sizes. The master of the forge is the oni mage Szalas Jal, who has focused his mystical studies on the creation of enchanted weaponry. Szalas spends years working on his weapons, and they are tools of great power; he rarely sells these masterpieces, but might make an exception.

The Venomous Voice: All the grist mills and most of the taverns of Bloodstone have a harpy songbird in residence, but these are frequently novices honing their skills. The best of these deadly singers reside at the Venomous Voice, a tavern that serves both as a roost for the independent harpies of Graywall and a place for daring patrons to hear musical duels between harpy virtuosos. Entertainment at the Voice also includes storytelling, choral training (used to teach the youngest harpies the basic skills), and command performances by the most gifted sirens. Many who visit the Voice find themselves braving the dangers of Bloodstone to return to the harpy tavern, and some jaded tourists travel from the Five Nations to hear the legendary performances. The Venomous Voice is managed by Zoryanna of the Last Dirge flight, a devotee of the Fury.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- ✦ An ally of the PCs has been condemned to fight in the arena for one week—and the odds of his surviving that long aren't good. Can the PCs find a way to free him from the arena between matches? Or do they fight in the arena at his side?
- ✦ Szalas Jal of Tooth and Steel has crafted a blade inscribed with dragonmarked patterns—a blade he believes has a role to play in the Prophecy. He thinks that one of the PCs might be destined to wield this weapon. But to prove it, the PC must fulfill a lesser prophecy—by passing through the

Deep Door and defeating the Impure Prince who makes his lair beneath the town.

- ✦ The PCs acquire a bottled dream that suggests someone is planning something they want stopped (anything from killing one of the PCs to starting a war between Droaam and Breland). Can they find Jabra, and if so, can they convince her to tell them the identity of the person from whom she harvested this dream?
- ✦ The PCs learn that an infamous war criminal is holed up in the Labyrinth. There is a high bounty on his head. But when the PCs make a move, they discover that the supposed criminal is a doppelganger. It's a trap laid by the medusa priestess Zerasha, who wishes to slay destined champions of Dol Arrah or the Silver Flame. Can the PCs escape from the Labyrinth, and if so, what else does the priestess of the Shadow have waiting for them?

The Calabas (The Kennel)

Population: House Tharashk is the pillar of this district, and humans, orcs, and half-orcs make up a significant segment of the population. Most of the expatriates and travelers from the east reside in the Calabas or at least pass through it, and most of the elves, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings of Graywall can be found here. Many menial jobs are held by goblins, though few live in the district.

Character: Surprisingly civilized, the Calabas is a piece of the Five Nations trapped in Droaam. Buildings reflect the styles of the Five Nations. Bright colors on the buildings and in the glass windows, with painted signs bearing names written in the Common tongue, provide a flamboyant range of shades to the area. Orc guards in Tharashk livery patrol the streets, but the more frightening monsters—trolls, harpies, medusas—are rarely seen here.

Inns: The Gold Dragon Inn; The House of the Nine; The Twilight Palace.
Taverns: The Cracked Keg; The Merry Marcher.
Supplies: The Goblin Market; Vorgath's.
Dragonmarked Services: Ghallanda; Jorasco; Kundarak; Orien; Phiarlan; Sivis; Tharashk.
Temples: The House of the Nine (Sovereign Host)

KEY LOCATIONS

The Calabas contains locations that might be of interest to PCs. The numbers are keyed to the map associated with this district.

1. The Roar: The heart of the Calabas is a vast plaza. It takes its name from the statue at its center, which is of a rampant dragonne roaring at the sky. The beast is the sigil of House Tharashk and reflects their power in this district. Aside from its scenic value, at night the Roar plays host to the Goblin Market. All manner of monstrous merchants come to sell their wares to travelers and tourists. Smiths and artisans from Bloodstone and Little Graywall bring their mundane goods, but astute shoppers might find stolen goods, relics recovered from Dhakaani ruins, treasures stripped from fallen soldiers, or any number of other surprises.

2. House Tharashk Enclave: The Tharashk triumvirate believes that Droaam holds tremendous opportunity for their house, and their Graywall enclave is the largest outside Zarash'ak. In addition to selling the services of inquisitives, trackers, and guides, the enclave holds training facilities for the monstrous mercenaries the house employs and serves as a hub for prospecting operations within the region. House Tharashk enforces the law within the Calabas, and the enclave includes an audience chamber where Baron Kundran Torrn or one of his ministers can hold court.

3. The Twilight Palace: A joint venture of House Phiarlan and House Ghallanda, the Twilight Palace is a wondrous thing to find in such a savage land. Designed to serve the needs of the wealthy expatriate or the successful merchant, the palace is a grand hostel, with luxurious accommodations and courteous staff well-versed in the customs of every nation in Khorvaire. Within its walls, a visitor can easily forget she is in Droaam. Phiarlan minstrels perform works from the golden age of Galifar, and the Ghallanda chefs produce culinary delights to stir even jaded appetites. Thanks to Kundarak security, the Palace is as safe as Xorchylic's fortress. Of course, such luxury comes at a heavy price: room and board starts at 35 sp per night and can go as high as 10 gp per night for a grand suite. If a customer rents an apartment by the week, the cost is reduced by 20%.

4. The Gold Dragon Inn: This inn is virtually identical to the Gold Dragon Inns found in cities across Khorvaire; it is House Ghallanda's ubiquitous accommodations for the budget traveler. The menu serves one simple, comforting dish from each of the Five Nations, so a Karrn trader can relax with a bowl of Nightwood stew and a Thrane can enjoy flame-grilled tribex. The Gold Dragon Inn is managed by Reskal d'Jorasco, a former clawfoot wrangler with the scars to back up his stories of capturing dinosaurs barehanded. Room and board at the Gold Dragon Inn costs 5 sp per night, which is reduced by 10% for stays of 5 days or more.

5. The Merry Marcher: Tucked along the edge of the Roar, the Merry Marcher is a friendly tavern for travelers who want something a little more exotic than the Gold Dragon Inn but don't want to brave the dangers of Bloodstone. The Marcher is owned by a half-orc named Durad Taash, and specializes in the cuisine of the Shadow Marches. Half-orcs and orcs from other lands are especially welcome and encouraged to tell tales of their travels.

6. Vorgath's: A former prospector turned entrepreneur, the orc Vorgath provides mundane goods to travelers. Vorgath is willing to buy interesting trinkets from prospectors, and he might buy goods from PCs

or have a magic item to sell; he typically has 1,500 gp on hand.

7. The Kundarak Vault: A small building with reinforced walls, the vault is shared by House Kundarak and House Sivis. Neither has an especially strong presence in Graywall, but there is a speaking stone and an access point for the Kundarak vault network, which allows clients of the bank to withdraw goods stored elsewhere in Khorvaire.

8. Far Davandi: An outpost of the famed Zil haberdasher, Far Davandi can produce clothing designed in the style of any of the Five Nations. It primarily serves expatriates who still remember their homeland fondly.

9. House Orien Enclave: This large outpost is designed to support multiple caravans at once, and it is currently operating below capacity. The Daughters of Sora Kell are interested in establishing trade routes and eventually lightning rails within their realm, and they have subsidized Orien's operations in Droaam. The local Baron, Saria d'Orien, is a canny negotiator and has formed close ties within the town.

10. Hahlo's House: Although small, this Jorasco house of healing can handle most problems. Thanks to his dragonmark, Hahlo d'Jorasco can perform Cure Disease, Raise Dead, or Remove Affliction rituals—although he adds a 20% "Droaam tax" to his prices unless he likes the clients.

11. The Silenced Stage: Subsidized by House Phiarlan, this playhouse specializes in works that have been banned in the Five Nations, along with new creations of exiled and expatriate artists. It is one of the major tourist draws in Graywall, since people travel from Fairhaven, Flamekeep, and Korth to see these forbidden performances. The luminaries of the company include Laren Devir, a Brelish playwright known for his antimonarchy rhetoric; half-elf Asta Brand, a Karrnathi singer-songwriter whose opera "Army of the Damned" is a bitter condemnation of both the Code of Kaius and the Karrnathi use of undead soldiers; and Syro Talandro, a changeling from Thrane renowned for his solo performances and his explorations of the dark side of the Church of the Silver Flame. Asta Brand is the founder of the company, having fled to Droaam after being turned into a vampire by the Order of the Emerald Claw; she considers herself to be a monster, and as such she believes there is no better place for her. If any of the PCs have artistic talent, Asta might seek to employ them in a performance at the Silent Stage; otherwise, Asta or any of the artists might want to talk to PCs who share her birthplace to find inspiration for new works.

12. Veils: Though small, this brothel has a stable of doppelgangers trained to mimic the accents and mannerisms common to any of the Five Nations. In addition to traditional services, Veils also provides escorts trained to pluck an image from the mind of a client—doppelgangers who can assume the form and mannerisms of a loved one, allowing an expatriate or traveling merchant to enjoy a meal or an evening in the company of someone lost through exile or slain in the war.

13. The Cracked Keg: This seedy tavern has smoked windows, and it is identified only by the barrel-shaped trade sign hanging over the door. This sign has a single crack running through the unmarked sign. The owner is Banor Blackbarrel, an old dwarf brigand who used to run potent troll grog to the troops stationed along the western border. In addition to serving powerful Droaamish spirits and sponsoring gambling, Banor runs a blood gin den in his basement—a home away from home for a growing number of dissolute exiles. Banor has contacts throughout the town, and PCs looking to find someone or something in Bloodstone could find him to be a valuable ally. But he's a ruthless and cruel person, interested solely in his personal profit.

14. The House of the Nine: This small inn and public house is also Droaam's sole temple to the Sovereign Host, run by a human family from western Breland. Hostess Channa Perryn blesses every meal in the name of Olladra and Boldrei, and Cord Perryn performs services in the back room. Neither Cord nor Channa are spellcasters, but they provide spiritual guidance to followers of the Host, and Cord might assist guests with his Heal (+14) skill. Room and board at the House of the Nine costs 5 sp, but there are only four rooms in the inn.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- A Cyran artificer named Dela Ranner has taken refuge in the Twilight Palace. The PCs have been hired to take her out of Graywall and back to their home country, as quietly as possible. First there's the challenge of overcoming the security of the Palace. But beyond that the PCs find themselves in conflict with spies and assassins from across Khorvaire. It seems Dela knows something about the cause of the Mourning. But what does she know—and do the PCs want even their own nation to have access to her?
- Asta Brand tells the PCs that the Order of the Emerald Claw is building an eldritch machine below the Calabas that might cause an army of undead goblins to rise and slaughter every citizen of the Five Nations in the town; they hope this causes war between Breland and Droaam. Do the PCs trust the vampire, and if so, can they stop the Claw?
- Cord Perryn of the House of the Nine approaches a PC who worships the Sovereign Host. Perryn has had a vision from the Sovereigns: A great evil is brewing in the Tharashk

enclave, and only the PCs can cleanse it. This evil is a cult of the Dragon Below, whose influence has spread throughout the enclave. They have already called up a number of aberrations from the depths; depending on the power of the PCs, they might now be working to summon Dyrrn the Corruptor. Xorchylic hates the lords of Xoriat, and this could be a chance for the PCs to earn the favor of the master of Graywall—but it might be a dangerous task, and depending how it is handled, it could easily make an enemy of House Tharashk.

Little Graywall (Sar Kuraath)

Population: Goblins and kobolds live here, along with a handful of gnomes and halflings scattered throughout the quarter.

Character: Sar Kuraath lives up to its name—it truly is little Graywall. Much of the town is designed to accommodate Large creatures, and the Hydra Halls have high ceilings and rooms with bunks large enough for trolls and ogres. But goblins are the single most numerous race in Graywall, and Little Graywall is built for them. Every building is designed for Small creatures. The goblin artisans produce goods for the Flayer Guard and the rest of the town, and workhouses have high ceilings and doors allowing ogres easy access to the goods they haul between districts. But all other aspects of the district—from furniture to the flagons served at Black Bahiri's—are designed with Small creatures in mind.

The goblins and kobolds of Graywall are proud of the measure of independence they have gained under the rule of the Daughters of Sora Kell, and Little Graywall is the symbol of this. Although there are tribal rivalries, goblins of different tribes almost always unite to fight a larger foe. As a result, the natives of this district are unusually bold here in their home, and they are less likely to put up with abuse from outsiders.

Inns: Black Bahiri's.
Taverns: None (Black Bahiri's).
Supplies: None.
Dragonmarked Services: None.
Temples: No public temple, though most warrens have their own idols or shrines.

KEY LOCATIONS

Tribal Warrens: Each goblin or kobold tribe has its own building, which is a structure that serves both as workhouse and barracks. Symbols painted over the door or embedded in the walls indicate the tribe that lives within: the Bone Crows, Hammer-Knockers, Hidden Hands, Stonebreakers, and others. By and large, each tribe focuses on a specific trade; the Stonebreakers work in the mines and quarries, while the Hammer-Knockers are blacksmiths and armorers.

Black Bahiri's: A single grist mill is in the Little Graywall, and most of the inhabitants dine there or make meals within their warrens. However, one inn has gained a measure of renown throughout Graywall. Black Bahiri is remarkably fat for a goblin; he is also a talented chef skilled in both Droaamish and Talentan cuisines. Thanks to under-the-table deals he gets prime materials from the Skin Factory in Bloodstone, and his Talentan preparations might be

the most palatable food an easterner can find outside the Twilight Palace. Bahiri has rooms for rent, and there are a few gnome and halfling exiles who make their homes here. Some believe that Black Bahiri's is a center for intrigue; there are rumors that the gnome who calls herself Shiv is a top agent of the Trust, and that Bahiri is a master spy from the Shaarat'khesh. These things might be true, or they might be pure fantasy. But if one is looking for a good meal accompanied by goblin song and cheerful company, Black Bahiri's is a fine choice. Bahiri does keep blood gin on hand for foreigners, but he does not sell the drug to goblins. Renting a room at Black Bahiri's costs 1 gp per night; since he has a limited number of rooms, Bahiri might turn down an unpleasant customer.

Swift Death: Many people come to Droaam in search of goods they cannot legally buy in the Five Nations . . . such as poison. It's possible to find simple toxins in the Goblin Market, but Graywall is home to a true master poisoner, a goblin named Swift. Some say that he is part of the Shaarat'khesh, while others claim Swift learned his trade poisoning ogres who abused his tribe. Arranging a meeting with Swift requires a skill challenge (level 7; complexity 1, primary skill Streetwise; a goblin gets a +3 bonus, and anyone asking in Black Bahiri's gets a +1 bonus). It's up to the DM to decide just what Swift has available at any given time, but he's one of the best sources of poison in western Khorvaire.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- ✦ An ally has been poisoned by a toxin that resists all magical treatment . . . a slow-acting venom mechanically similar to a disease. If anyone can create a cure, it's Swift—but the PCs first have to learn about the goblin's existence, locate him, and then convince him to help them.
- ✦ A Stonebreaker goblin named Jorl approaches the PCs. He says that his clan found a great treasure in the depths, and that they can give it to the PCs—if the PCs murder a visiting oni mage and his ogre followers, who once held the Stonebreakers in bondage.
- ✦ The gang wars in Sharn have escalated, due largely to the treachery of Zharo, a halfling from the Boromar crime family. Zharo has stolen a lot of the Boromar's treasury and hidden it; unless they can recover their treasure, the balance of power in the City of Towers will be irrevocably altered. Zharo is hidden in Black Bahiri's, drinking blood gin and hiding from the world. Can the PCs find him, and can they convince him to reveal the location of the treasure?

The Karda (The Throne)

Population: The Karda is the home of the Flayer Guard and the Znir Pact barracks. Orcs, ogres, minotaurs, and gnolls make up the bulk of the population, while the troop of war trolls form an impressive (if small) segment of it. Aside from the soldiers, goblins and orcs can be seen performing menial tasks and civilian jobs. Foreigners are not welcome here, and few humans or other easterners are visible.

Character: For all that it can be seen as a center for trade, Graywall is a military outpost on the border of Droaam and Breland, and the Karda is the fortress at the heart of the town. High, thick walls surround the district. Foot soldiers patrol the streets, and harpies and gargoyles circle overhead. The gates are open, but the minotaur sentries question any who wish to enter, demanding to know the business that takes them to the Karda. Foreigners are treated with suspicion and might be questioned by patrols.

Inns: None.
Taverns: None.
Supplies: None.
Dragonmarked Services: Ghallanda; Jorasco; Kundarak; Orien; Phiarlan; Sivis; Tharashk.
Temples: No public temples, though there are shrines in the barracks.

KEY LOCATIONS

No businesses are in the Karda. There is a grist mill for the soldiers, but no public amenities. It is a fortress, with barracks for the Flayer Guard and Znir Pact, armories, and other facilities needed to hold the citadel in the face of a siege.

The Keep: The seat of Xorchylic's power, the Keep is the strangest building in Graywall. The mind flayer took a personal hand in its design, and its walls are whorled and rounded; at times they gleam with an iridescent sheen. Fifty elite troops are garrisoned within the tower, and it is fortified to withstand a siege. Xorchylic's throne sits on the third floor, and he spends most of his time in this great seat, listening to the thoughts of the town and plotting an incomprehensible revenge against the lords of Xoriat.

The Last Tower: This is the courthouse of Graywall. It is also the last place many of those who come before a magistrate ever see. The tower serves both as a prison and as a center for torture. Droaamish law doesn't believe in incarceration as a form of rehabilitation, and prisoners are only held if they are waiting for transfer, execution, or serving a sentence in the arena (which can last days or weeks). Public executions are held in the plaza, and statues are also arranged around the tower—these are victims petrified by the medusa magistrate and left as a warning to others. Typically, the justice has the right hand of a petrified victim removed, to ensure that if the victim is restored it is at least maimed.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- ✦ The PCs are hired to rescue a petrified victim (possibly a friend, or a spy from their nation who has learned vital information) from the courtyard of the Karda. They have to identify the target among the stone menagerie and then either remove the statue from the Karda or perform the Remove Affliction ritual in the Karda—all beneath the watchful eye of Xorchylic and his Flayer Guard!

The Deep Door (Khyras)

Graywall is built atop the ruins of Korash Khaar, and the fortress of the Dhakaani goblins stretched deep beneath the earth. The fragments of history suggest that the final attack that broke the Dhakaani defenses came from beneath the citadel. No one living knows just what lies below the Dhakaani tunnels. Almost all the entrances to the depths have been sealed, save for a heavily guarded passage in Bloodstone . . . the Deep Door. Xorchylic has allowed adventurers to enter the depths before, for reasons of his own; it's also possible that PCs might learn of an unguarded passage to the deep tunnels. What lies beyond the Deep Door remains a mystery. Storytellers spin tales of aberrant legions locked in combat with goblin ghosts and of deep wyrms atop piles of Dhakaani gold. The truth might be more wondrous still, or infinitely more terrible.

The Stone Pits

Graywall is a town in progress. To the east, the scars of quarries run deep into the stony ground, while the west holds the rough foundations of new buildings—additional hydra halls and new fortifications. Although most of the members of the labor force have bunks within the town, some are awaiting the construction of these barracks. In addition, new monsters are coming to Graywall every week in search of opportunities. Droaam is still a nation in progress. Many of its people still chafe under the rule of their tyrannical warlords, and they hope to achieve greater things by serving the Daughters directly—or at least by serving the Lord of Graywall. As such, the Stone Pits are surrounded by a tent town made up of both temporary workers and those refugees who hope to join their ranks.

Forces within Graywall

Many factions are at work in Graywall. Although the Daughters forged Droaam into a nation, tribal and racial ties are still a powerful force within the town. Ambitious warlords such as Tzaryan Rrac or the Queen of Stone might have their own operatives in the town. And then there are the spies, Brelish bandits, and groups of deserters or war criminals drawn from across Khorvaire. Here are descriptions of a few organizations, but this is just the tip of the iceberg.

The Flayer Guard

Leader: Korgel Blackblade (male war troll battle champion)
Other Notables: Jalira Stormtongue (evil female bloodfire harpy warlord 11), Salan (evil male wererat rogue)
The Flayer Guard, elite soldiers of Droaam, keep the peace in Droaam, but they stand ever ready to face a challenge from Breland—or to launch an attack against the eastern kingdoms. The majority of the guards are orcs and minotaurs, along with a few ogres and trolls (remarkably intelligent for their kind, but still saved for brute force operations). The Flayer Guard has a number of special units. Jalira Stormtongue commands a squad of gargoyles and harpy archers who serve as scouts and air support; while she is otherwise identical to an 11th-level bloodfire harpy, Jalira's burning song deals lightning and thunder damage. Salan commands a squad of ten small wererats; all possess a +3 bonus to Stealth and Perception, and they appear as goblins when not in hybrid form. The true core of the Flayer Guard is the team of twenty war trolls, a unit trained by Sora Maenya. These fearsome soldiers are under the command of Korgel Blackblade, a war troll of terrifying skill and power, who wields a magic greatsword forged by Szalas Jal.

Each member of the Flayer Guard is utterly devoted to the group's illithid master, due equally to patriotism and psychic conditioning. They are veteran soldiers and use intelligent tactics in combat; players expecting orcs and ogres to be bumbling buffoons are in for an unpleasant surprise.

House Tharashk

Leader: Baron Kundran Torrn (male half-orc)
Other Notables: Kel'Ashta (evil male orc), Mor'Ashta (evil male orc bloodrager), Jana Velderan (female human ranger 8), Lagraa (female half-orc)
House Tharashk is a powerful force within Graywall, especially within the Calabas. Under Baron Kundran Torrn, the house has reached out to orcs across the town. Through his generosity and feats in the challenge rings, Kundran has also earned the respect of many of the other inhabitants of Graywall. The Graywall enclave is the hub of a number of different operations, including prospecting within the region, employing and training monsters to serve as merce-

naries and laborers in the east, and the usual work of finding anything that needs to be found. Kel'Ashta is a talent scout for mercenaries, who is well connected with the Graywall arena. Mor'Ashta commands the house guard that minds the enclave and maintains order in the Calabas—a mixed force of 20 orc raiders, berserkers, and warriors, along with any monstrous mercenaries currently on hand. And Jana Velderan is the chief inquisitive. Jana has faced challenges in Graywall due to her race, but she's good at what she does and has made contacts with many of the local bandits.

Lagraa is the spiritual counselor of the enclave, and her nature determines what sort of long-range stories might evolve here. She might be an adept of the Gatekeeper druids, in which case she can call on PC Tharashk heirs to fight aberrations and terrors beneath the town. However, she could be an evil priestess of the Dragon Below, slowing spreading her poisonous beliefs throughout the enclave and calling up horrors from the darkness. If this is the case, the Tharashk enclave could ultimately become the hub for an epic adventure, since Lagraa and her disciples release a daelkyr lord! Will this madness taint all House Tharashk, or has it been contained in Graywall?

The Redcaps

Leader: Gurb Bonecrow, also known as the Raven (male goblin hexer wizard 5)
Other Notables: Reka the Razor (evil female kobold slyblade rogue 5)
Inspired by stories of the fey of the same name, this gang is made up of goblins and kobolds, and it operates out of Little Graywall. For thousands of years, the smaller races have been oppressed by larger, more powerful creatures. The Redcaps are dedicated to taking vengeance for these indignities. They enjoy ambushing ogres and trolls on general principle, but specifically target anyone who abuses goblins or kobolds, whether they are locals or foreigners. So far they have not provoked a response from the Flayer Guard, but this could be a matter of time.

The Redcaps are drawn from multiple tribes. They operate in secret, hiding behind masks and their blood-soaked red caps. The group is led by Gurb Bonecrow, a talented goblin wizard who calls himself "the Raven" when masked; his chief lieutenant is Reka the Razor, an especially deadly slyblade.

The Old Bones

Leader: Zaris Lornath (evil male human warlord)
Other Notables: Cayna (evil female dwarf death master), Desh Anarn (evil male skeleton tomb guardian bodyguard)
The Old Bones are veteran Karrnathi soldiers—patriots and fanatical followers of the Blood of Vol. However, they are not members of the Order of the Emerald Claw; they have concluded that the leaders of the Emerald Claw are not truly devoted to the principles of the Blood of Vol, nor do they have the best interests of Karrnath at heart. They dream of some day driving the treacherous Kaius III from the throne and simultaneously cleansing the ranks of the Seekers.

Although their goals might appeal to Karrns, the Old Bones are not virtuous champions. Many of them are war criminals who are wanted for acts of extraordinary cruelty during the Last War. The cleric Cayna is infamous for slaughtering prisoners of war so that he could raise them as undead soldiers, and Zaris Lornath ordered many attacks on civilian populations. The Old Bones believe in terror as a tool and necromancy as a weapon, and they stop at nothing to ensure Karrnathi supremacy. The Old Bones could be allies against the Emerald Claw, but they are disturbing allies at best.

It's up to the DM to decide just how powerful Zaris and Cayna are. Their greatest ally is Desh Anarn, a fallen champion of the Blood of Vol returned as a sentient tomb guardian. The circumstances that allowed Anarn to return with such power remain a mystery; this could be due to his great faith in the Blood of Vol, or he could be a creation of Erandis Vol—a spy sent to watch this splinter group to see if it can be used.

The Skinners

Leader: Zurin Souldrinker (male oni night haunter)
Other Notables: Gray Garrak (male bugbear strangler rogue 8)
The Mockery is the Sovereign of murder and treachery, and the Skinners believe that he guides their hands. This gang of monsters actively preys on the people of the east, killing foreigners foolish enough to leave the safety of the Calabas—and occasionally venturing within its walls to target an outspoken follower of the Silver Flame or paladin of Dol Arrah. When possible, the Skinners take victims alive so they can be tortured slowly. The leader of this gang is Zurin Souldrinker; his devour soul power strips the skin from a victim even as it inflicts damage, and it can be used on a target that is either unconscious or helpless. His strong second is Gray Garrak, a vicious bugbear with a remarkable gift for slaughter.

The Swords of Liberty

Leader: Tars Faldren (male human demagogue)
Other Notables: Tolri (evil female tiefling wizard/devastator), Norn (male dwarf bodyguard)

The Swords of Liberty operate in secret within the borders of Breland. Tars Faldren is one of the founding members of the organization, and when it became too dangerous for him to remain in Breland, he decided to establish a safe house in Graywall—a haven for Swords on the run and a base of operations from which to openly spread their message. Faldren has been operating out of Graywall since 997 YK, and he has been petitioning foreign governments, speaking with dragonmarked houses and the Korranberg Chronicle, and otherwise spreading his antimonarchy message. Publicly he downplays the violent actions of the Swords of Liberty, but behind the scenes he uses his position to acquire illegal goods for use by his allies in Breland.

Faldren's safe house is hidden within Bloodstone. He is accompanied by a number of Swords, including new recruits, bodyguards, and a few others who have been exposed and are wanted in Breland. Chief among these is Tolri, a tiefling wizard infamous for her skill at crafting ritual scrolls that set off terrible explosions.

PCs who sympathize with the Swords of Liberty can come to Graywall to make contact with Tars, or to receive missions or equipment. Alternatively, the King's Citadel could ask the party to infiltrate the Swords and shut them down—but only after learning about upcoming plans and Faldren's contacts within Breland.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of Dungeons & Dragons® since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the *Eberron® Campaign Setting* and *Shadows of the Last War*, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

Playtest: Barbarian

by Rob Heinsoo, Mike Mearls, Jesse Decker, and Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by Steve Argyle

"MY STRENGTH is the fury of the wild."

Class Traits

Role: Striker. You use powerful two-handed weapons to deal serious damage to your enemies. Your physical power and daunting presence can cause foes to cower before you, and you can temporarily increase your abilities by harnessing great bursts of terrifying rage. Depending on your choice of class features and powers, you lean toward either defender or leader as a secondary role.

Power Source: Primal. You are a primal champion, a warrior devoted to the natural world and an embodiment of your tribe's fierce traditions.

Key Abilities: Strength, Constitution, Charisma

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather, hide
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, military melee
Bonus to Defense: +2 Fortitude

Hit Points at 1st Level: 15 + Constitution score
Hit Points per Level Gained: 6
Healing Surges per Day: 8 + Constitution modifier

Trained Skills: From the class skills list below, choose three trained skills at 1st level.
Class Skills: Acrobatics (Dex), Athletics (Str), Endurance (Con), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Nature (Wis), Perception (Wis)

Class Features: Feral Might, Rage, Rampage

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Barbarians are savage warriors who deal out powerful blows from their mighty weapons. They charge from foe to foe and seldom feel the pain of an enemy's strike. For barbarians' foes, the moments of greatest terror come when barbarians call upon primal forces to lend power to their raging spirits. These rages, although temporary, give a barbarian incredible powers, a combination of skill, willpower, and a legacy of ancient tribal rituals.

As a barbarian, you possess a link to powerful nature spirits and other primal forces bound to the warriors of your tribe by the songs and totems of your legacy. These spirits lend great power to your rages, transforming you into a devastating force on the battlefield while you wield them. As you increase in power, these rages transcend mortal limitations, manifesting directly as waves of elemental power or gifting you with supernatural recuperative powers.

When the heat of battle is upon you, how will you respond? With a sudden charge that fells with one mighty swing of your weapon, or with a prolonged rage that leaves destroyed foes in your wake?

Barbarian Overview

Characteristics: You combine powerful melee attacks with an excellent ability to absorb damage. You gain tremendous bursts of power through mighty rages.

Religion: Most barbarians revere the primal spirits of the natural world rather than calling on the gods of the Astral Sea. Some barbarians don't see conflict between the gods and the primal spirits and therefore honor deities of nature or warfare in addition to the primal spirits. These barbarians often revere Kord, Melora, Avandra, or the Raven Queen. Evil or chaotic evil barbarians turn to Gruumsh or, more rarely, Bane or Zehir.

Races: Goliaths are ideal rageblood barbarians. Dragonborn make excellent thaneborn barbarians. Half-orcs are often barbarians but don't favor either of the two types. Dwarf and shifter barbarians tend to be rageblood barbarians, while halfling and half-elf barbarians choose the thaneborn path.

Barbarian Class Features

Barbarians have unusually high hit points for their role, making them more durable than other strikers. In addition, barbarians have three class features.

Feral Might

Barbarians connect with the natural world in a variety of ways. Some barbarians grow so hardened to physical punishment that they find it easier to simply absorb, rather than avoid, attacks. Others are living examples of the power of one's will to shape one's fate.

This preview presents the Rageblood Vigor option, which provides bonuses to certain barbarian powers, as detailed in those powers.

Rageblood Vigor: You gain the *swift charge* power. In addition, whenever you reduce an enemy to 0 hit points, you gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier. The number of temporary hit points equals 5 + your Constitution modifier at 11th level and 10 + your Constitution modifier at 21st level.

Rage

Your daily attack powers are known as rages, and they allow you to unleash powerful bursts of emotion, willpower, and primal energy. Each rage starts with a powerful attack and then grants an ongoing benefit until the rage ends.

What's a Playtest Article

This article, presenting the barbarian, is the first in a new semi-regular feature in *Dragon*. Every few months, we're going to give you a sneak peek at content scheduled for release in a print product sometime in the coming year or so. That means this content is not finished. That's right, you're looking at something that's still being worked on by our designers, developers, and editors.

In this case, we're presenting the barbarian, which is scheduled for release in 2009 in *Player's Handbook 2*. This article presents a single build for the barbarian, from 1st to 30th level. That means that not only is this content liable to change between now and when you see the class in print, but you're only seeing a portion of the class's eventual suite of powers. Everything you see here is still eminently playable, so feel free to create your first barbarian character and start playing.

Because this class isn't done, though, we're also asking for your feedback. If you have comments on the barbarian, feel free to send them to dndinsider@wizards.com. Include the subject line "Barbarian Playtest Feedback" in the subject line, and be specific! If your comments are of the "I just don't like it" or "I think it's great" nature, that won't help us make this class the best it can be. The more specific you are in the nature of your comments, the better. So dig deep and tap that inner game designer!

Rage

- **Duration:** Your rage lasts until you enter a new rage, until you drop to 0 hit points or fewer, or until the end of the encounter.
- **Rage Strike:** While raging, you gain access to the power ***rage strike***, which allows you to channel one of your unused rages into a devastating attack.
- **At-Will Attack Powers Enhanced:** Your barbarian at-will attack powers gain additional benefits while you are raging. The benefits are detailed in those powers' descriptions.

Rampage

Once per round, when you score a critical hit with a barbarian attack power, you can immediately make a melee basic attack as a free action. You do not have to attack the same target that you critically hit.

Creating a Barbarian

You can choose any barbarian powers you like for your character, though many barbarians favor one of two different builds: the rageblood barbarian and the thaneborn barbarian. All barbarians rely on Strength. Barbarians also benefit from a high Constitution or Charisma, depending on which expression of the class they favor. This preview presents the rageblood barbarian.

Rageblood Barbarian

You can withstand great deals of physical punishment, especially when in the throes of rage. At higher levels, your powers, particularly your rages, visibly manifest the spirits sacred to your tribe. Strength should be your highest ability score, since you use it for your attacks, but make Constitution a close second. Charisma might be your third-best score, especially if you want to use some powers designed for the thaneborn barbarian build. Choose the Rageblood Vigor form of Feral Might. Rageblood barbarians lean toward defender as a secondary role.

Suggested Feat: Weapon Focus

Suggested Skills: Athletics, Endurance, Perception

Suggested At-Will Powers: *howling strike*, *recuperating strike*

Suggested Encounter Power: *avalanche strike*

Suggested Daily Power: *bloodhunt rage*

Barbarian Powers

Your powers are evocations of primal strength. At lower levels, your powers rely partly on martial skill and personal presence, but even at the start of your career, the primal spirits of the world infuse your body with vigor. At higher levels, the primal spirits flow more freely through you and your weapons, creating effects that are more obviously supernatural.

Class Features

All barbarians know *rage strike*, usable only during a rage.

Rage Strike — Barbarian Feature

You channel your primal rage into a devastating attack.

At-Will ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be raging and have at least one unused rage power.
Target: One creature
Effect: Before the attack, you expend an unused rage power.
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: You deal damage based on the level of the rage power you expended:

1st level	3[W] + Strength modifier
5th level	4[W] + Strength modifier
9th level	5[W] + Strength modifier
15th level	6[W] + Strength modifier
19th level	7[W] + Strength modifier
25th level	8[W] + Strength modifier
29th level	9[W] + Strength modifier

Miss: Half damage.

Your Rageblood Vigor class feature grants you the *swift charge* power.

Swift Charge — Barbarian Feature

As your foe falls, you rush toward your next victim.

Encounter ✦ Primal
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: Your attack reduces an enemy to 0 hit points
Effect: You charge an enemy.

Level 1 At-Will Evocations

Howling Strike — Barbarian Attack 1

With a blood-freezing scream, you throw yourself into the fray.

At-Will ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + 1d6 + Strength modifier damage.
Increase damage to 1[W] + 2d6 + Strength modifier at 11th level and to 2[W] + 3d6 + Strength modifier at 21st level.
Special: When charging, you can use this power in place of a melee basic attack. If you are raging, you do not provoke opportunity attacks for moving during the charge.

Pressing Strike — Barbarian Attack 1

You push lesser foes from your path, moving through the lines of battle at will.

At-Will ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Effect: Before the attack, you shift 2 squares. You can move through an enemy's space during the shift, but you can't end there.
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you push the target 1 square. If you are raging, the attack deals 1d6 extra damage.
Increase damage to 2[W] + Strength modifier at 21st level.

Recuperating Strike — Barbarian Attack 1

Nothing restores your will to fight more than slamming your weapon into a foe. Each crushing swing gives you more will to press on.

At-Will ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier. If you are raging, you instead gain temporary hit points equal to 5 + your Constitution modifier.
Increase damage to 1[W] + 1d6 + Strength modifier at 11th level and to 2[W] + 2d6 + Strength modifier at 21st level.

Level 1 Encounter Evocations

Avalanche Strike — Barbarian Attack 1

You drop your guard and put all your strength into a devastating overhead swing.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Rageblood Vigor: The attack deals extra damage equal to your Constitution modifier.
Effect: Until the start of your next turn, any attacker gains a + 4 bonus to attack rolls against you.

Great Cleave — Barbarian Attack 1

The numbers arrayed against you mean nothing. You swing your weapon in a great arc, stopped by nothing so trivial as flesh and bone.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Close** burst 1
Target: Each enemy in burst you can see
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage + 1 damage for each enemy adjacent to you.

Level 1 Daily Evocations

Bloodhunt Rage — Barbarian Attack 1

Your rage surges up from the depths of your pain to bring pain to the wounded.

Daily ✦ Primal, Rage, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You manifest the rage of the bloodhunt. Until the rage ends, you gain a bonus to melee damage rolls equal to your Constitution modifier if either you or your target is bloodied.

Swift Panther Rage — Barbarian Attack 1

You slash your foe with fury as the spirit of the swift panther grants you its speed and agility.

Daily ✦ Primal, Rage, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You manifest the rage of the swift panther. Until the rage ends, you gain a +2 bonus to speed and can shift 2 squares as a move action.

Level 2 Utility Evocations

Great Leap — Barbarian Utility 2

With a surge of strength and will, you leap a great distance without a running start.

Encounter ✦ Primal
Move Action **Personal**
Prerequisite: You must be trained in Athletics.
Effect: You make an Athletics check to jump with a +5 power bonus. You are considered to have a running start and can move as far as the check allows.

Primal Vitality — Barbarian Utility 2

Drawing strength from the ground beneath your feet, you push away the pain of minor wounds.

Daily ✦ Primal
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You gain temporary hit points equal to one-half your level + your Constitution modifier. If you are raging, you instead gain temporary hit points equal to one-half your level + twice your Constitution modifier.

Level 3 Encounter Evocations

Blade Sweep — Barbarian Attack 3

Though the fury of your attack is directed at a single foe, no nearby enemy is spared your wrath.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and each bloodied enemy adjacent to you takes damage equal to your Constitution modifier.
Rageblood Vigor: Each enemy adjacent to you, bloodied or not, takes damage equal to your Constitution modifier.

Hammer Fall — Barbarian Attack 3

You swing your weapon in a great underhand arc, and the impact lifts your target off its feet and sends it crashing to the ground.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you knock the target prone.

Level 5 Daily Evocations

Frost Wolf Rage — Barbarian Attack 5

Like the great spirit wolf whose breath is the cold north wind, you are wreathed in frost, chilling those who try to harm you.

Daily ✦ Cold, Primal, Rage, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Effect: Before the attack, the target can make a melee basic attack against you as a free action. If it makes that attack, your attack deals 1[W] extra cold damage.
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier cold damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You manifest the rage of the frost wolf. Until the rage ends, any enemy that hits you with a melee attack takes cold damage equal to 3 + your Constitution modifier.

Thunder Hawk Rage — Barbarian Attack 5

Your thunderous attack dazes your foe as you channel the great spirit hawk whose wings rumble across the sky. Your screaming charge blasts your enemies with thunder.

Daily ✦ Primal, Rage, Thunder, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You manifest the rage of the thunder hawk. Until the rage ends, before you take any actions during each of your turns, you can knock an adjacent enemy prone as a free action.

Level 6 Utility Evocations

Inexorable Shift — Barbarian Utility 6

You pound across the battlefield, leaving no opening as you move and drawing strength from the numbers arrayed against you.

Daily ✦ Primal
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You shift a number of squares equal to your Constitution modifier. You then gain temporary hit points equal to 1d10 + 1 for each enemy within 2 squares of you.

Instinctive Charge — Barbarian Utility 6

Instinctively aware of danger, you are poised to fight as soon as the battle begins.

Daily ✦ Primal
No Action **Personal**
Trigger: You roll initiative at the beginning of an encounter
Effect: You gain a +5 power bonus to your initiative. You also gain a +2 power bonus to your first attack roll during the encounter.

Level 7 Encounter Evocations

Great Shout — Barbarian Attack 7

You slam your weapon into a foe then give voice to the rage of your ancestors, cowing those who dare to stand against you.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and each enemy within 5 squares of you takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Tide of Blood — Barbarian Attack 7

Your rage sweeps over every nearby enemy, drawing blood to fuel the tide of your assault on one of them.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage. The attack deals 1 extra damage for each enemy adjacent to you.
Rageblood Vigor: The attack instead deals 1 extra damage for each enemy within a number of squares of you equal to your Constitution modifier.

Level 9 Daily Evocations

Oak Hammer Rage — Barbarian Attack 9

The ancient spirit of the oak knocks your foe to the ground. As you rage, you knock foe after foe down to the earth, then strike them with the earth's fury.

Daily ✦ Primal, Rage, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you knock the target prone.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You manifest the rage of the oak hammer. Until the rage ends, whenever you hit a target with a melee attack, you knock that target prone. If that target is already prone, the attack instead deals extra damage equal to your Constitution modifier.

Stone Bear Rage — Barbarian Attack 9

The spirit of the stone bear that hunts at the mountains' roots courses through you, and its fury blunts the pain of your wounds.

Daily ✦ Primal, Rage, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You manifest the rage of the stone bear. Until the rage ends, you gain resistance to all damage equal to 3 + your Constitution modifier.

Level 10 Utility Evocations

Mountain Roots — Barbarian Utility 10

You sink your spirit into the earth to stand your ground.

Daily ✦ Primal, Stance
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: You are pulled, pushed, or slid
Effect: You negate the forced movement. Until the stance ends, you can negate forced movement against you.

When the frenzy of battle seizes you, you ignore pain and even keep fighting while others would fall, raging like an unconquerable whirlwind of destruction.

Wellspring of Renewal — Barbarian Utility 10

You draw on a fount of primal energy to renew your strength and your focus.

Encounter ✦ Primal
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You gain temporary hit points equal to one-half your level + your Constitution modifier. In addition, if you are marked, that condition ends.

Level 13 Encounter Evocations

Blade Whirlwind — Barbarian Attack 13

Driven by strength and will, your weapon sweeps in a mighty arc that cuts every foe around you and drives them back from your fury.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Close** burst 1
Target: Each enemy in burst you can see
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Rageblood Vigor: You push the target 1 square.

Crack the Skull — Barbarian Attack 13

You slam your weapon against the skull of your foe, leaving it disoriented.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target is dazed until the end of your next turn.

Level 15 Daily Evocations

Flameheart Rage — Barbarian Attack 15

The spirit of the red dragon imbues your attack with fiery wrath, scorching your foe. As you rage, the fire of the dragon's heart lashes out at those that strike you.

Daily ✦ Fire, Primal, Rage, Weapon
Standard Action **Close** burst 1
Targets: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You manifest the rage of the red dragon. Until the rage ends, any creature that hits you with a melee attack takes fire damage equal to 5 + your Constitution modifier.

Thunderfury Rage — Barbarian Attack 15

Charging at your foe and knocking it to the ground, you call on the spirit of the thunderfury boar to grant you health and strength in your rage.

Daily ✦ Healing, Primal, Rage, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you knock the target prone.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You manifest the rage of the thunderfury boar. Until the rage ends, whenever an enemy adjacent to you attacks you, you can make a melee basic attack against that enemy as an immediate reaction.

Level 16 Utility Evocations

Great Stomp — Barbarian Utility 16

As you slam your foot into the ground, primal energy pours through you, buckling the ground beneath you with its power.

Daily ✦ Primal
Minor Action **Close** burst 5
Effect: Each square in the burst becomes difficult terrain until the end of your next turn.

Spur the Cycle — Barbarian Utility 16

Just as in the natural world, death leads to new life: killing your foe spurs you to further action.

Daily ✦ Primal
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You reduce an enemy to 0 hit points during your turn
Effect: You take a standard action.

Level 17 Encounter Evocations

Shoulder Slam — Barbarian Attack 17

You lower your shoulder into your foes, driving them across the ground.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Primary Target: One creature
Primary Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you push the target 1 square. You then shift 1 square and make a secondary attack.
Secondary Target: One creature other than the primary target
Secondary Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Special: When charging, you can use this power in place of a melee basic attack. If you charge, you gain a bonus to the primary attack roll equal to your Constitution modifier.

Vigorous Strike Barbarian Attack 17

You strike your foe with a mighty assault that bolsters you against attacks.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you gain temporary hit points equal to one-half your level.
Rageblood Vigor: You instead gain temporary hit points equal to one-half your level + your Constitution modifier.

Level 19 Daily Evocations

Storm Drake Rage Barbarian Attack 19

Lightning cascades around you and flows into your enemy. As you rage, lightning lashes out at any foe that strikes you, knocking it to the ground.

Daily ✦ Lightning, Primal, Rage, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier lightning damage, and ongoing 10 lightning damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Your manifest the rage of the storm drake. Until the rage ends, any enemy that hits you with a melee attack takes 5 lightning damage and is knocked prone.

Winter Phoenix Rage Barbarian Attack 19

Your blow erupts in grasping frost as the spirit of the winter phoenix enters you. As you rage, vitality surges through you to ward you from death.

Daily ✦ Cold, Healing, Primal, Rage, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier cold damage, and ongoing 10 cold damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You manifest the rage of the winter phoenix. Until the rage ends, you gain regeneration 5 + your Constitution modifier. In addition, the first time you drop to 0 hit points or fewer, you can spend a healing surge as an immediate interrupt.

Level 22 Utility Evocations

Primal Instinct Barbarian Utility 22

You close your eyes and strike guided more by your instincts than by your senses.

Daily ✦ Primal
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You gain blindsight 10 until the end of the encounter.

Untouched Barbarian Utility 22

Primal energy from the earth and the air courses through you, cleansing you from the dire effects of battle.

Daily ✦ Primal
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You make a saving throw against each effect on you that a save can end. You gain a bonus to the saving throws equal to your Constitution modifier.

Level 23 Encounter Evocations

Crater Fall Barbarian Attack 23

You dip your weapon in a great underhand arc and then drive it up into your opponent, sending it flying back through the air.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you push the target 3 squares and knock it prone. This forced movement ignores hindering terrain, such as a pit, between the target's starting square and its destination. If you push the target through squares occupied by other enemies, those enemies are knocked prone.
Special: When charging, you can use this power in place of a melee basic attack. If you charge, you instead push the target a number of squares equal to your Strength modifier.

Fatal Strike Barbarian Attack 23

Your powerful attack, like the coming of winter, puts an end to growth and healing.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 4[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target cannot regain hit points until the start of your next turn.
Rageblood Vigor: The attack deals extra damage equal to your Constitution modifier.

Level 25 Daily Evocations

Blood Hunger Rage Barbarian Attack 25

Your fierce attack leaves your target reeling. As you rage, the Primal Beast surges in your blood, drawing on the carnage around you to empower your attacks.

Daily ✦ Primal, Rage, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 7[W] + Strength modifier, and the target is dazed (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You manifest the blood hunger rage. Until the rage ends, you gain a bonus to attack rolls equal to the number of bloodied creatures within 3 squares of you.

Stone Tempest Rage Barbarian Attack 25

Like the mighty storms that shake the earth, your attack crashes into your foe and brings it to the ground. As you rage, your fury turns your attacks into devastating wounds.

Daily ✦ Primal, Rage, Thunder, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 7[W] + Strength modifier thunder damage, and you knock the target prone.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Your manifest the rage of the stone tempest. Until the rage ends, you can score a critical hit on a roll of 18-20.

Level 27 Encounter Evocations

Blood Frenzy — Barbarian Attack 27

The blood of your foes fills you with a thirst for more violence.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC. You gain a +2 bonus to the attack roll if the target is bloodied.
Hit: 5[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.
Rageblood Vigor: The bonus to attack rolls is equal to your Constitution modifier.

Hurricane of Blades — Barbarian Attack 27

You become a tempest of steel, ripping through your foes in a horrific display of carnage.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One or more creatures
Attack: Strength vs. AC, six attacks
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage per attack.

Level 29 Daily Evocations

Rage of the Primal Beast — Barbarian Attack 29

The Primal Beast awakens within you, and your attack leaves your foe bleeding. As you rage, you feed on the presence of your foes; overwhelming numbers only make you stronger.

Daily ✦ Primal, Rage, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 5[W] + Strength modifier damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You manifest the rage of the Primal Beast. Until the rage ends, you gain a bonus to attack rolls equal to the number of enemies you can see.

Winter Ghost Rage — Barbarian Attack 29

The touch of your weapon is the wintry chill of death. As you rage, the spirit of winter fills you, causing you to become a ghost to your foes as you near death.

Daily ✦ Cold, Primal, Rage, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 6[W] + Strength modifier cold damage, and ongoing 10 cold damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You manifest the rage of the winter ghost. Until the rage ends, you are insubstantial while you are bloodied.

Paragon Path

Frenzied Berserker

"Caution? Discretion? No! Valor is to face your foe in battle and then stand over the broken corpse."

Prerequisite: Barbarian

The devastation of the thunderstorm rages in your soul, wild and untamed. You thrill in the chaos of battle, your rage unquenched and uncontrollable. Battle, for you, is not a means to an end; it is an end in itself. The thrill of combat draws you on, and wounds only drive you to greater frenzy.

Caught in the frenzy of your rage, you must attack—calculated maneuvers and intricate strategies are diversions. You attack with sweeping blows that cleave through your enemies or lock single foes in deadly exchanges that can only end in the death of one or the other of you. When the frenzy of battle seizes you, you ignore pain and even keep fighting while others would fall, raging like an unconquerable whirlwind of destruction.

Frenzied Berserker Path Features

Frenzied Blood (11th level): If you spend an action point to make a melee attack and that attack misses, you deal half of that attack's damage on the miss.

Warpath (11th level): Whenever you hit with a melee attack while raging, the attack deals 2 extra damage. In addition, whenever you start your turn adjacent to one or more enemies while raging and are able to take actions, you must either make a melee or a close attack against one of those enemies during your turn or be stunned until the end of your next turn.

Unfeeling Rage (16th level): You gain resist 5 to all damage while you are bloodied and raging.

Frenzied Berserker Evocations

Persistent Frenzy — Frenzied Berserker Attack 11

Caught up in the madness of your rage, you swing your weapon again and again.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Close** burst 1
Target: Each creature in burst you can see
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Special: If you use this power while raging, roll a d20. On a 10 or higher, you retain the use of this power.

Deathless Frenzy — Frenzied Berserker Utility 12

For a time, rage can stave off even death.

Daily ✦ Primal
No Action **Personal**
Trigger: You drop to 0 hit points or fewer
Effect: You are dying, but you don't fall unconscious until you fail a death saving throw.

Final Confrontation	Frenzied Berserker Attack 20
Your rage spills over to your foe, locking the two of you in a lethal duel.	
Daily ✦ Primal, Weapon	
Standard Action	**Melee** weapon
Target: One creature	
Effect: Before the attack, if the target is marked, that condition ends on it. It can then make a melee basic attack against you as a free action.	
Attack: Strength vs. AC	
Hit: 7[W] + Strength modifier damage.	
Miss: Half damage.	
Effect: After the attack, you can allow the target to make a melee basic attack against you as a free action. If the target makes that attack, you can make a melee basic attack against it as a free action. You can repeat this effect until the target chooses not to make the attack.	

About the Authors

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Campaign Items

by Stephen Schubert

illustrations by Drew Baker and Amir Salehi

A TYPICAL D&D CAMPAIGN sends its heroes into the depths of dungeons, to battle against hordes of orcs or undead monstrosities, or even to the farthest reaches of the planes. The PCs of your game will unearth long-lost treasures and arm themselves with powerful magic items on their way to their epic destinies. But what about treasure that isn't exactly a pile of gold or a magic sword? The rewards your PCs achieve can include more than magic items and such treasure. What if the reward for defeating the pirate king is both his ship and his fleet? What if the adventure that leads to an artifact is just the beginning?

In addition to the hundreds of magic items found in *Adventurer's Vault*, you'll also find that part of the first chapter of that tome deals with vehicles. The *Dungeon Master's Guide* provides rules for artifacts. These rules are there for a reason: We want you to use these elements in your own campaign. This article discusses some of the challenges unique to these big-ticket items and gives suggestions on incorporating some of these various items into your game. It also provides notes on how such items find a way into your PCs' hands, how to incorporate them into the ongoing flow of the game, and even what to do when their relevance to the campaign has passed.

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Using Artifacts in Your Game

The introduction of an artifact into your campaign doesn't need to be a world-shaking event. Artifacts have always been a part of D&D lore, and legendary items such as the *Rod of Seven Parts*, the *Axe of the Dwarvish Lords*, and Vecna's various unattached body parts continue to show up through each iteration of the D&D game. But why leave them in the campaigns of decades past? You could include an artifact when you want to reward the party or a PC for a job well done, but an artifact should also provide motivation for the party or a specific PC to complete a quest or advance your campaign story. The presentation of each artifact comes packaged with the goals and lore associated with the item, and as DM you should integrate those goals into your campaign story. Of course there is nothing to prevent you from adjusting some of the details of an existing artifact to fit your campaign.

When you incorporate an artifact into your campaign, consider answering the following questions:

How do the PCs obtain the artifact?
You should create the story and specifics of how the artifact comes into the possession of the PCs. An obvious way is to have the PCs quest for the item specifically. In this case, knowledge-based skills, such as History, Arcana, or Religion (or perhaps some sage's advice) should provide enough background on the artifact that the PCs know what they are looking for, and perhaps even know its capabilities. This could be as simple as finding the item in its long-lost vault, or it might span multiple adventures as the PCs gather pieces of the artifact then finally learn and use a ritual to assemble it. You could instead have the artifact suddenly appear in your campaign—by having an NPC give it directly to the PCs, or having a more mundane item spontaneously transform.

Another alternative is to have the artifact be in possession of an enemy of the PCs, and once the PCs acquire it they uncover its true nature.

What is the impact of the artifact on your campaign design?
An artifact is also created with its own goals and a list of tasks that its wielder might do to gain its favor, also called concordance. The concordance goals are not only an incentive for the player to try specific tasks, but also an incentive for the DM to include those situations in the campaign. Artifacts that are generally benevolent, such as the *Axe of the Dwarvish Lords* or the *Invulnerable Coat of Arnd*, are designed to progress along with the PCs, and so those PCs should have an opportunity within the campaign to achieve the artifact's goals and unlock the greater powers that come with improving the artifact's attitude. Malevolent artifacts, on the other hand, can become most interesting when the PCs try to balance pleasing the artifact to access its power while still working toward goals against the artifact's wishes.

How does the artifact impact encounter design?
Although the concordance can help you plan how the artifact should work in your campaign world, the artifact's abilities should help you plan encounters the PCs will face. It is more fun, after all, to be able to use the artifact's powers than to not impact any encounters at all.

When does the artifact move on?
Generally, an artifact should stick around for a couple of levels before finally moving on and out of your campaign. You can choose to foreshadow the artifact's exodus, or at least have the event be expected by the PCs. Usually, the artifact (and thus the PC) should have reached a major goal, probably one that occurs at the climax of an adventure. The PC should know that that goal is fulfilling the destiny of the item—whether it is slaying the vampire lord Strahd with the ancient *Sunsword*, sealing away a demon lord until the end of the age with the *Rod of Seven Parts*, or otherwise establishing its name in legend. Sometimes the end of an artifact is the great event, especially when questing to destroy a dangerous but tempting artifact—such as throwing a ring of power into a volcano, or imprisoning an evil artifact inside a sphere of annihilation.

Let's take a look at the *Dungeon Master's Guide* artifacts as examples:

Invulnerable Coat of Arnd

As indicated in its description, this item is best suited for heroic tier play. Think of the *Invulnerable Coat of Arnd* as an entry-level artifact that can help your players get used to the idea of artifacts in your game. The base feature of the *Invulnerable Coat of Arnd* is +2 *chainmail*, which puts it in line with armors between levels 6 and 10 (though more powerful, due to its artifact powers), though once it moves on it might leave enough residuum to create a 10th-level item. Therefore, you could consider this artifact to be a 10th-level item, and have it take the place of a 10th-level item in a treasure parcel (essentially, award one fewer magic item of that level).

This particular item is well suited to be liberated by the PCs from a defeated villain, especially if the villain is a few levels above the PCs but has not satisfied the *Invulnerable Coat's* wishes (giving the villain the –2 penalty to defenses against lower-level creatures). Alternatively, the *Invulnerable Coat* could be bestowed upon the PCs by a sponsoring organization as the PCs set out on an adventure.

With its energy resistance and bonus to fear effects, the *Invulnerable Coat of Arnd* is perfect for a slayer of dragons, since those abilities work to counter the breath weapon and frightful presence shared by dragons. Since the energy resistance can

also be changed to necrotic, this artifact also stands out in adventures where the PCs face undead threats.

The *Invulnerable Coat of Arnd* should move on before your campaign progresses very far beyond the heroic tier (levels 1–10). Assuming the PCs have advanced the *Invulnerable Coat's* concordance to pleased, you should time the artifact's passing with the conclusion of a major adventure, such as vanquishing an adult dragon. In fact, the specific aid provided by the *Invulnerable Coat* might allow you to throw a slightly tougher encounter at the party—one that is made slightly easier by the artifact's abilities.

Sample Scenario: Ralgov Blackhand, a bandit leader in the region, has become more aggressive of late after discovering the power of the *Invulnerable Coat of Arnd*, which he stole from a blue dragon's lair. The *Invulnerable Coat* is unsatisfied with the cowardly Ralgov, and once the PCs defeat the bandit, the *Invulnerable Coat* adopts one of them as its new bearer. The blue dragon sends his agents to recover the coat, first by demands, and then by force, until finally the PCs confront the dragon directly and defeat him. At this point, the *Invulnerable Coat* has assured itself (and its hero) a place in the legends of this region, and moves on.

The Axe of the Dwarvish Lords

A truly epic weapon, the *Axe of the Dwarvish Lords* is perfect for campaigns in the mid-20s (levels 22–26 or so). Although it isn't an ordinary +5 *axe*, its enhancement bonus puts it in line with other weapons available in early epic play, and if the wielder works on the *Axe's* goals, then it upgrades nicely into a weapon that could function well into the later epic levels, and it leaves behind a solid 28th-level magic axe once it moves on. When you put this artifact into the campaign, have it take the place of a 28th-level magic item from a treasure parcel. Normally, this would mean that it wouldn't show up

until 24th level at the earliest, but you could achieve similar results by having it take the place of a 25th-level item, and then later replace a 28th-level item in a parcel with another 25th-level item.

The history and flavor of this item suggest that it wouldn't be found in a random treasure pile. Instead, the *Axe of the Dwarvish Lords* is more likely to be the object of its own adventure as a final reward that then pushes the PCs on to even greater adventures.

When designing further encounters, remember that the wielder of the *Axe* should greatly appreciate taking on foes of larger size, simply because of the damage boost provided by the artifact's properties. Of course, if you make every encounter deal with large foes, then you run the risk of this PC clearly outshining the rest of the party, so mix up the encounters. You could also add some tension to the artifact's concordance by using a group of evil dwarves as a recurring nemesis. They should appear just enough to make the *Axe's* wielder concerned, maybe even dropping the concordance to unsatisfied for an encounter or two.

Sample Scenario: An exarch of Moradin appears to the PCs and tells them to retrieve the *Axe of the Dwarvish Lords*, proclaiming that the safety of the dwarves is at risk. Only the true savior of the dwarves and a champion of Moradin can overcome the deadly vault in which the *Axe* has been safely kept for eons. Once they acquire the *Axe*, the PCs learn of an impending giant invasion, spearheaded by an alliance of storm titans and death titans. Only upon defeating this threat do the PCs uncover the true force behind the giants' restlessness: A primordial has loosed its bonds and is on the verge of escape. The *Axe* then chooses a new champion from among the dwarves, while the PCs set off to the Elemental Chaos to continue the fight against the primordial.

The Hand and Eye of Vecna

Although the previous two artifacts represent valor and the destruction of evil, not all artifacts in your campaign need to be good (as in good-aligned). Hundreds of adventures, and many classic stories, revolve around the impact an evil artifact has on the world. Sure, it's easy to pick up an artifact and put it on your big bad evil guy, but it can be more compelling and rewarding to explore how the PCs interact with the evil artifact after they deal with that big bad evil guy. Usually, the PCs' instinct is to destroy evil artifacts, and the destruction can be its own adventure, but you can add a twist by making the use of the evil artifact part of the adventure to destroy it.

For example, the *Dungeon Master's Guide* suggests an option for the destruction of the *Hand of Vecna* that involves severing the *Hand* by using a sword of a specific dead god. You could expand on this by requiring that the *Hand* first be submerged in the embalming fluid used to embalm the original corpse of Vecna, and that fluid is kept in a vault which opens only when the *Eye of Vecna's* necrotic beam is used upon it. Of course, the necrotic beam is available only when the *Eye's* concordance is satisfied, requiring not only the acquisition of the *Eye*, but the installation and use of it, as well.

In a typical campaign, PCs should have a difficult time meeting the concordance goals of an evil artifact. Thus, the best way for a PC to bend it to his or her will is by gaining levels to earn that +1d10 bonus to the artifact's concordance. A character has to deal with the artifact for a level or two before gaining the ability to access its greater powers, and throughout that time you can tempt the PC with walking down the dark, easy path.

Vehicles

In many campaigns, mounts and vehicles are part of the background. Transportation might be hand-waved, or quickly explained away during the "downtime" between significant scenes in the adventure or campaign. When the PCs obtain mounts or use a wagon to travel from town to town, it doesn't have to provide a campaign-altering effect. But when the PCs decide to purchase a seagoing vessel or charter an airship, it can become more than just a way to travel from point A to point B—it can also become the PCs' base of operations and can even serve as a focal point of an encounter or an adventure.

If you want to make vehicles more than just a narrative tool, you can use the same list of questions that we used to think about artifacts.

How do the PCs acquire the vehicle?
Among the variety of ways to bring the vehicle into your campaign, consider allowing the PCs to receive the ship (or at least gain use of the ship) as a gift at the outset of an adventure, ostensibly to travel to the adventure locale. They also might win their ship by defeating its crew, either on land or on the ship. They could discover an ancient vessel in a sea cave or similar hiding place. Or a PC might decide that he or she has saved enough gold to buy a ship outright.

What is the impact of the vehicle on your campaign design?
First and foremost, place adventure locations in areas that the vehicle can reach. A sea-based campaign can involve uncharted islands, pirate battles on the high seas, or races between ports of call. A flying vehicle lets you include adventures at the tops of mountains, in sky-soaring citadels, or in cities perched along cliff faces. When the PCs are in the middle of a dungeon, they probably aren't using the vehicles for travel, so that mode of transportation can be secured easily.

For example, most ships or larger conveyances are manned by a crew that keeps the ship out of danger while the PCs are away. But you could still plan to have NPCs occasionally capture or attack the ship, which could force the PCs to deal with the threat when they return or while they are on a journey. Just as a location might have a part to play in your campaign, so too can the vehicle play its own part. Ultimately, you as DM decide the size of the part the vehicle plays.

How does the vehicle impact encounter design? Include some encounters where the movement and piloting of the vehicle is the focus, such as chasing an enemy vessel or navigating treacherous terrain. Have a map handy of the ship's deckplan, so you can also include shipboard or ship-to-ship battles, where the action takes place directly on the ship. Fighting broadsides against pirates, repelling a sahuagin assault, or fighting air elementals while airborne are all ways to incorporate the ship directly into encounters. You can also combine skill-based piloting challenges with an ongoing fight. For example, the PCs might need to steer their riverboat through rapids while being boarded by an orc tribe that swings down from the trees along the river.

When does the vehicle move on? Unlike artifacts, vehicles don't have their own goals, but they do have a purpose in your campaign. The vehicle can continue to be useful as long as it suits the needs of your campaign. However, resist the temptation to make every form of transportation somehow crash, become sabotaged, get stolen, or otherwise leave the campaign abruptly—after the PCs have gone through a carriage wreck, an airship crash, and the sinking of their submersible, you might find that their interest in vehicles will wane somewhat.

Vehicles as Treasure

The *Adventurer's Vault* lists a few vehicles along with their prices. Each price also indicates the expected PC's level, since the price is equivalent to a magic item of the desired level. For example, at 1,800 gp, the pinnace is as expensive as a 6th-level magic item, and so we expect that PCs can acquire it around the middle of the heroic tier of play, whereas the four-masted greatship is priced at 13,000 gp, which places it at the entry point of paragon play. A ship that the PCs can turn around and sell at the nearest port could be considered treasure, since it ultimately equates to gold pieces, so you could establish captured vessels as "prize" ships, in effect giving the PCs thousands of gold pieces without requiring a literal pile of loot. Of course, if a specific vehicle is going to become the focus of an adventure (or for a campaign), you don't have to include that vehicle as part of the treasure the PCs obtain during that adventure.

Sample Scenario, Ocean Vessel: The PCs are aboard an ocean freighter, guarding some cargo in transit, when the freighter is attacked on the high seas by another ship with a boarding party. The PCs repel the invaders and defeat the enemy ship's captain. The freighter's captain puts a skeleton crew aboard the pirate vessel, and in gratitude she gives the ship to the PCs. The PCs then are tasked with defeating a pirate fleet, which leads to an island-hopping adventure as they track down the rest of the pirate fleet while they are at the same time pursued by a wraith-infested ghost ship. This sort of campaign seed works well in the heroic tier of play—perhaps around levels 4–6.

Sample Scenario, Airship: The PCs first require the aid of an airship captain when searching for a yuan-ti temple hidden in an impenetrable jungle. From the air, the PCs have a better chance at spotting the ophidian construction while avoiding the hazards typical to jungle terrain. After the PCs show their mettle by defending the ship against flying foes including rocs and dragons, the ship's captain agrees to follow the heroes to the ends of the world. The PCs then test that oath once they discover a ritual that can transport the entire ship to any plane, which takes the airship to the Feywild, the Elemental Chaos, and other destinations beyond. A campaign arc such as this can provide a bridge between paragon and epic adventures. This advice for adding artifacts and vehicles to your game could be extended to just about anything the players want to get their hands on or that you want to include in your game. Think about the best way to incorporate the concept, and make sure that the reasons for it are understood by the players (even if some time after its introduction). Figure out how it impacts your campaign world and the adventures you write, and how you should incorporate it into your game. Understand how to make encounters that feature the concept. Figure out how long you want it in your game, and at what point you want it to make its graceful exit.

Good gaming!

About the Author

Stephen Schubert works as the lead developer for the D&D Miniatures Game and also develops RPG products. His recent credits include the 4th Edition *Monster Manual*, *Adventurer's Vault*™, and the new edition of the *Dungeons & Dragons Miniatures Game*. Dec 2007

Items of Legend

New Artifacts for Your D&D Game

by David Noonan
illustrations by Gonzalo Flores and David Griffith

Artifacts have been a staple of D&D since 1st Edition. The *Dungeon Master's Guide* presents several legendary items to inspire adventures—even entire campaigns. More accessible than in any previous incarnation of the game, artifacts can now make their way safely into the hands of characters even in the paragon tier, or possibly before. This article presents new artifacts to supplement those in the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* from the strange figurine of an ebony elephant to a helm of untold power. If used with care, they can become a fabulous source of inspiration for your game, and provide one lucky character with an experience he or she will never forget.

Broken Blades of Banatruul

The Broken Blades of Banatruul are now two swords, but they were once a single greatsword belonging to Grand Warlord Banatruul, whose armies cut a wide swath across the land in a series of crusades more than three centuries ago. In a titanic battle with an army of dragon-riding githyanki, Banatruul died in battle with the githyanki general—on the verge of his greatest triumph.

Records of that battle's aftermath are fragmentary, but some mysterious creator placed the pieces of Banatruul's shattered greatsword into two fields of magical force. And thus two mirror copies of Banatruul's sword exist—each with the metal shards that the other sword lacks. The two swords have never had the same owner since Banatruul's death...yet.

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Broken Blade of Banatruul **Paragon Level**

You hold the sword—more of a sword-shaped energy field, really—aloft. You see jagged shards and splinters of dark gray metal, some intersecting like puzzle pieces and others floating in the energy field's suspension.

The Broken Blade of Banatruul is a *+4 greatsword*.
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Property: The *Broken Blade* emits dim light within 5 squares at all times.
Property: If you roll a natural 20 on an attack roll, you gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls for the rest of the encounter. If you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll, you suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls for the rest of the encounter.
Power (Encounter ✦ Force): Free Action. Use this power when you hit a target with the Broken Blade. You can attack the target with *cloud of daggers* (wizard 1), and you can attack with your Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity instead of your Intelligence. This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.
Power (Daily ✦ Force): Standard Action. You cast the shards of the blade out in a whirling storm to shred your foes before they return to the field that holds them together. Area burst 2 within 10; your choice of Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity vs. Reflex; 3d10 force damage (half damage on miss).

The Broken Blades of Banatruul are appropriate for characters in the middle of the paragon tier and upward. The two swords, known as the Dawnblade and the Duskblade, share the same basic powers and properties, but each has its own powers that it grants to an owner who's proved himself worthy of Banatruul's legacy.

Goals of the Broken Blades

- ✦ Always be marching toward the next battle.
- ✦ Safeguard your comrades in arms (Dawnblade) or put your enemies to the sword (Duskblade).
- ✦ Become reunited with the other Broken Blade and somehow reform to become whole.

CONCORDANCE

Starting score	5
Owner gains a level	+1d10
Defeat an enemy four or more levels higher than you	+1
Protect a dying comrade (Dawnblade only)	+1 (max 1/encounter)
Execute a prisoner (Duskblade only)	+1 (max 1/day)
Owner of the other Broken Blade defeats an enemy four or more levels higher than you	-1
Remain in the same community for more than a month	-1
Allow two weeks to pass without an actual battle (sparring doesn't count)	-1

Roleplaying the Broken Blades of Banatruul

Both blades are capable of twisting in their owners' grips and momentarily glowing brighter or dimmer—techniques they use to express pleasure or disappointment in the actions of their owners. And each sword can speak in Banatruul's gravelly voice, but only when either of two conditions exist: it's the time of day they're named after, or something is about to happen to change the concordance score.

Fundamentally, both swords want their owners to give the sword the sensation of being on a great crusade, just as they were back when they were one sword wielded by one of the world's great conquering warlords. And they want a reunion with the other Broken Blade, but each sword wants that reunion to be on its terms. If there's anything in the world that a Broken Blade fears, it's the other Broken Blade. But that fear is tempered with a desire to be whole once again, so a Broken Blade in proximity to its twin alternates between aggression and caution, and its owner will notice that the sword's personality is becoming increasingly unstable.

In general, the Dawnblade is more introspective and more concerned about the owner and his comrades in arms, while the Duskblade is more extroverted and eager to dominate enemies. But neither sword is good or evil. Even when the united sword hung from Banatruul's scabbard, it witnessed great acts of both valor and cruelty.

Pleased (16–20)

"Banatruul himself would smile at your efforts, then immediately make you one of his khans."

The Broken Blade regards you as a true conqueror—a worthy heir to Banatruul himself. It actively assesses whether you're capable of bringing the Broken Blades together, or whether it's time to move onward.

Property: If you roll a natural 19 on an attack roll, you gain a +2 bonus on attacks for the rest of the encounter.
Power (Dawnblade only) (Daily ✦ Force): Minor Action. You can sacrifice your own vitality to power your next attack. You take ongoing 5, 10, or 15 damage (save ends) and add an equal amount to the damage you deal with your next hit before the end of the encounter.
Power (Duskblade only) (Daily ✦ Force): Minor Action. Your next successful attack during this encounter deals ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends), and every time your enemy takes the ongoing damage, you heal 10 hit points.

Satisfied (12–15)

"Such a victory, master...not since the Battle of Grievous Peak have I seen such valor. Truly this crusade is blessed by fate."

The Broken Blade exults at the chance to serve you in battle, and the bigger the fight, the better. Sometimes in the dusk or dawn, it regales you with a whispered

tale of Banatruul himself in an effort to encourage you to dream similar dreams of conquest.

Power (Dawnblade only) (Encounter): Minor Action. Your sword interposes itself between you and incoming attacks, the shards shining as brightly as mirrors. Until the end of your next turn, you and allies adjacent to you gain a +2 bonus to all defenses.

Power (Duskblade only) (Encounter): Minor Action. Your sword turns shadowy and transparent. It ignores armor to strike at the flesh beneath it. Until the end of your next turn, your melee attacks can target Reflex defense instead of AC if you wish.

Normal (5–11)

"Charge the largest one—once we take his head, the others will flee or fall into line."

The Broken Blade has the attitude of a gruff drill sergeant. It'll order you into battle, hoping to see signs that the heart of a conqueror beats within your breast.

Unsatisfied (1–4)

"Why are we talking to them? Put them to the sword! Do it now!"

Your sword craves battle, and it'll use the tools at its disposal to send you headlong into a fight, hoping that some sign of Banatruul's warrior spirit will emerge in the midst of combat.

Property: You take a –2 penalty to all defenses against an enemy you have not yet attacked in an encounter.

Angered (0 or lower)

"Coward, you will either die or learn to be worthy of me."

The Broken Blade knows you're unfit to wield it. If it sees someone exhibit Banatruul's combat prowess and fighting spirit, it will inveigle its way out of your possession. Absent a worthy candidate, it'll simply disappear at dawn or dusk, whispering one last imprecation before it goes.

Property: If you roll a natural 20 on an attack roll, you gain a +1 bonus on attacks (instead of a +2) for the rest of the encounter. If you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll, the Broken Blade curses your feeble sword-arm and disappears, returning at the end of the encounter.

Property: You are compelled to remain in battle. When an enemy attacks you, you cannot move away from that enemy until the end of your next turn.

Moving On

"My next conquest will take me where you cannot follow." One of two things will send the Broken Blade elsewhere: The presence of the other Broken Blade or the promise of an invasion campaign in distant lands.

When the Broken Blade moves on, it crumbles into residuum worth 85,000 gp. If it leaves in a pleased state, the owner gains a permanent +2 bonus to Intimidate checks, but if it leaves in an angered state, the owner takes a permanent –2 penalty to Diplomacy and Intimidate checks.

The Immortal Game

Unlike most artifacts, the Immortal Game doesn't directly help you on your adventures. But it contains the promise of power: defeat the ghostly chessmaster bound to the board, and fantastic rewards are yours for the claiming.

As the owner of the chessboard, you play one exchange of moves per day against the chessmaster. If you win, the chessboard rewards you richly before departing, never to return. If you lose, you'll have to deal with the curse attached to the artifact.

The Immortal Game is appropriate for a character in the early paragon tier and upward.

The Immortal Game **Paragon Level**

This fine marble chessboard has white and red pieces. When you set the pieces out before you, a spectral, skeletal figure appears opposite you and silently beckons you to take the first move

The Immortal Game is a wondrous item.
Property: +2 bonus on skill checks made as part of a scrying or divination ritual.

Goals of the Immortal Game

- Test every aspect of each owner.
- Reward the worthy, and punish the unworthy.

Roleplaying the Immortal Game

The Immortal Game appears to be a finely wrought chessboard when first discovered. But if someone sits down at the board and sets up the pieces to begin a game, the spectral chessmaster appears. If the PC sits with the white pieces, then the chessmaster beckons the PC to make the first move. Otherwise the chessmaster points toward the board, and one of the central pawns slides forward.

The game is played with one exchange of moves per day. Whenever the owner wants to play, he need only set out the pieces as they were on the previous day and the chessmaster will appear. After the exchange of moves, the chessmaster disappears, and the board can be put away until the next day.

How to Play the Game

Those who try their hand at the Immortal Game quickly learn that it's more than just a chess match. As the game progresses, the player starts to ignore his surroundings while playing, and eventually he'll be impossible to rouse from a catatonic state while the moves are being played. The Immortal Game is played on many levels, some of which the player is only subconsciously aware of.

Each day, the player makes an ability score check. Success means a strong move, and failure means a weaker move. The first move is always an Intelligence check. After that point, randomly determine with a d6 which check you use for each day's exchange of moves.

Intelligence Check (1-2): The board position is unclear, and you have to work through several positional nuances. See the Concordance section for the DC. The exchange of moves takes 10 minutes.

Charisma Check (3-4): The chessmaster glowers at you, pitting the force of its personality against you as it dares you to make or avoid a specific move. See the Concordance section for the DC. The exchange of moves takes 10 minutes.

Constitution Check (5-6): The board seems to be sapping your energy the longer you stare at it. See the Concordance section for the DC. The exchange of moves takes 1 hour.

The Chessmaster

The chessmaster is an intangible manifestation of the artifact itself, and it can't be hurt. It ignores everything except for the game in front of it. It doesn't speak, but it occasionally slumps its shoulders, nods, or otherwise uses body language after a particularly good or bad move.

If anyone tries to take a chess piece more than 5 squares away from the chessboard, the spectral chessmaster appears, transforms into a dread wraith (found on page267 of the *Monster Manual*), and vigorously shakes his head. The following round he attacks the bearer of the chess piece if it's not back with the chessboard. Defeating the dread wraith means the chessmaster appears and turns into a dread wraith all over again.

If anyone upsets the chessboard while the owner is playing, the chessmaster likewise turns into a dread wraith and attacks. And if the concordance score is 12 or higher, the PC playing the game is immediately dominated and attacks anyone disrupting the game until all the pieces are put back in place.

Concordance

Until a chess game starts, the artifact has no concordance and the owner gains only the ritual property.

CONCORDANCE

Starting score	5
Owner gains a level	+1d4
Succeed at an ability score check	+1
Fail at an ability score check	-1

Pleased (16-20)

[Mumbles.] "Pin the rook...then knight to h3..."

At this point, the player has an overwhelming advantage and is working through various endgame scenarios. But the chessmaster's final defenses are both tenacious and full of traps. The DC for the ability score checks is 14 + one-half the PC's level.

Property: You gain a +3 bonus on skill checks that use the same ability score that you used in your last exchange of moves. You get the bonus whether or not you actually succeeded at the ability score last time, as long as you're at this concordance level.

Satisfied (12-15)

"Sorry, what was that? I was thinking about the chess game."

The player has attained a significant advantage of position or available pieces, and is starting to put together the elements of a winning match. The DC for the ability score checks is 12 + one-half the PC's level.

Property: You gain a +1 bonus on skill checks that use the same ability score that you used in your last exchange of moves. You get the bonus whether or not you actually succeeded at the ability score last time, as long as you're at this concordance level.

Normal (5–11)

"The chessmaster is good, but my board position isn't bad. Here, I'll show you."

The board position is balanced, with neither side likely to leap into an advantageous position soon. The DC for the ability score checks is 10 + one-half the PC's level.

Unsatisfied (1–4)

"The middle of the board is overrated, anyway."

The chessmaster has exploited some weak moves on the player's part and now has a strong board position. The DC for the ability score checks is 12 + one-half the PC's level.

Property: You take a –1 penalty on skill checks that use the same ability score that you used in your last exchange of moves. You take the penalty whether or not you actually failed at the ability score last time, as long as you're at this concordance level.

Angered (0 or lower)

[Mumbles.] "Sacrifice the bishop...but that only buys me a move or two..."

The player is offering a last-ditch defense against a cohesive array of the chessmaster's pieces. The DC for ability score checks is 14 + one-half the PC's level.

Property: You take a –3 penalty on skill checks that use the same ability score that you used in your last exchange of moves. You take the penalty whether or not you actually failed at the ability score last time, as long as you're at this concordance level.

Moving On

"For a number of reasons, I'm glad it's gone. The game was exhausting in ways I can't even describe."

The Immortal Game moves on when the game is over, rewarding the player's tactical wisdom or punishing the player's tactical foolishness.

Win: The only way to win is to reach a concordance score of 21. At that point, the chessboard disappears and the player receives a reward as determined below.

Draw: A draw can occur in one of two ways. A match that reaches the 30th exchange of moves is a draw. If the owner loses the chessboard or doesn't play at least every other day while at a concordance score of 5 or higher, that's also a draw. If the player gets a draw, he gets neither the reward nor the curse.

Loss: A loss can likewise occur in two ways: by reaching a concordance score of –5 or by losing the chessboard or refusing to play at least every other day while at a concordance score of 4 or lower. The player receives a curse as determined below.

Rewards

The player chooses one of the following: When the PC slides a creature, he can slide one more square than normal; or when the PC grants a shift to a creature, he can grant one more square of shift than normal. If the DM determines other small boons that reward a tactical nature, he or she can substitute that instead.

Curses

The DM chooses one of the following: When the PC slides a creature, he slides one square fewer than normal (minimum 1); or when the PC grants a shift to a creature, he can grants one square fewer than normal (minimum 1). If the DM determines other small penalties that punish tactical failure, he or she can substitute that instead.

DM Advice

When you introduce the Immortal Game into your campaign, realize what you're in for: The player will probably play the game for a month or two of game time, and then receive a reward or a big curse.

Ordinarily, the chessboard disappears after the match, but if someone else at your table is keen to try it out (and the first game was good for your campaign), it's OK to have the chessmaster end the game by picking up the board and laying at another PC's feet.

And if you really want to mix it up, you can actually play chess with one of your players, rather than relying on the ability score checks. If you aren't a proficient chess player (or if you're *too* good), you can use a computer chess application, set to whatever difficulty level seems appropriate to you. But maintain the "one exchange of moves a day" rule, because it's important that the game unfold gradually—and preferably while the PCs are undertaking traditional adventures.

Figurine of Tantron

An artifact-level version of the figurines of wondrous power found in Adventurer's Vault, the Figurine of Tantron is a capable mount for an entire group of PCs, and if they treat it well, it's a mobile headquarters as well.

The Figurine of Tantron is appropriate for character in the upper paragon tier and upward.

Goals of the Figurine of Tantron

- Bear its owner in regal style across the world.
- Rampage and crush.
- Find others of its kind.

Roleplaying the Figurine of Tantron

In its animate form, Tantron has the intellect and demeanor of a particularly smart dog. It can follow multi-step commands, avoid hazards on its own, and reason its way through dilemmas. It doesn't speak, but

its roars, bellows, and snorts are expressive enough, and its owner instinctively knows what it wants. How friendly Tantron is depends on the concordance score.

Pleased (16–20)

"We're inside the howdah! How can it possibly have a wine cellar?"

Tantron will take its owner anywhere it wants to go—literally to the Nine Hells if that's what it takes. But it also grows restless and hopes to find other elephants like it.

Property: Once per day, Tantron can travel to any teleportation circle whose sigil sequence you have memorized, as per the Planar Portal ritual. You must be resting on or in the howdah, and you and any other creatures on Tantron travel with him. Tantron requires 10 minutes to complete the transition.

Property: When you summon Tantron, he appears with a howdah that acts as a *Mordenkainen's mansion* (described on page167 of the *Player's Handbook*), except that it's even more lavish, with a courtyard, fountains of water and wine, and a full staff of noncombatant servants. The mansion lasts as long as Tantron is active, but creatures can't remain inside when Tantron becomes a figurine.

Figurine of Tantron **Paragon Level**

This black marble statue of an elephant has eyes that glitter like the sapphires they are. But they also follow movement around the room as if the figurine were a living thing.

The Figurine of Tantron is a wondrous item and a figurine of wondrous power.

Power (Encounter ✦ Conjuration): Standard Action. Use this figurine to conjure Tantron, a huge elephant that appears to be made of black marble (see below for statistics). As a free action, you can spend up to two healing surges when activating this item; each one gives the elephant temporary hit points equal to your healing surge value.

On the platform on its back, Tantron can carry one Large or up to five Medium creatures weighing no more than 5,000 pounds total. If more than 5,000 pounds are placed on it, Tantron refuses to move until the load is under his limit.

Tantron **Level 16 Brute**
Huge natural animate (mount)
Initiative As conjurer **Senses** Perception +13
HP 50; **Bloodied** 25
AC 29; **Fortitude** 32 **Reflex** 26, **Will** 26
Speed 8, swim 6
⊕ **Stamp** (standard; at-will)
+19 vs. AC; 2d12 + 8 damage and the target is knocked prone.
Trampling Charge (while mounted by its owner) ✦ **Mount**
When charging, Tantron can move through one Medium or smaller creature's space and make a stamp attack against that creature. Tantron must end its move in an unoccupied space, and the rider still attacks at the end of the mount's movement.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Str 26 (+16)	**Dex** 16 (+11)	**Wis** 10 (+8)
Con 22 (+14)	Int 5 (+5)	Cha 15 (+10)

Satisfied (12–15)

"Climb aboard. Tantron will get us there in no time."

Tantron has grown more comfortable with its new owner, and it's more accepting of the owner's companions as well.

Property: Tantron can remain in elephant form as long as you wish. A minor action is sufficient to turn him back into a figurine.

Property: Tantron benefits from Shadow Walk (*Player's Handbook*, page312); multiply Tantron's overland travel speed by 5.

Normal (5–11)

"Charge, Tantron!"

At this concordance score, Tantron is happy whenever it's not in figurine form and gets to crush things beneath its feet. It pines for others of its kind and distrusts anyone other than its owner.

Unsatisfied (1–4)

"Um, why is Tantron turning back toward us?"

Tantron shows some reluctance when following directions from its owner, and it either ignores or gives a trunk slap to others nearby.

Property: Whenever Tantron takes damage, roll 1d6 at the start of its next turn. On a roll of 1 or 2, Tantron attacks its owner (if present) or any of the owner's allies.

Angered (0 or lower)

"It's gone berserk! Run!"

Tantron is simmering with hostility and increasingly unpredictable. It's not adverse to attacking anyone who gets in its way, no matter what side they're on.

Property: Whenever Tantron takes damage, it attacks its owner (if present) or any of the owner's allies.

CONCORDANCE

Starting score 5	
Owner gains a level	+1d10
Tantron uses its trampling charge power (maximum 1/day)	+1
Tantron crushes something worth at least 1,000 gp under its feet (maximum 1/day)	+1
Tantron interacts with friendly huge creatures	+1 (+2 if the creatures are elephants)
Tantron is conjured indoors or underground	-1
Tantron takes damage from a PC or its allies	-2

Moving On

Tantron misses others of its kind. Maybe it's going to look elsewhere—or maybe Tantron found them and is living among them now.

Tantron moves on after a few weeks in the highest or lowest concordance levels, or after a few month's time in any case. Each owner of the figurine instinctively understands that Tantron is trying to find other elephants like it, and it'll wander the world until it finds the rest of its herd.

If Tantron is pleased when it departs, it crushes a nearby object under its feet one last time, leaving behind 20,000 gp in residuum, then Shadow Walks into the sunset. If it's angered, however, it tramples on anyone and anything nearby, then disappears when there's nothing left nearby to destroy or when attacks from the PCs reduce it to 0 hit points.

Helm of the Madman's Blood

The creation of a power-mad sorcerer, the Helm of the Madman's Blood offers great power even as it loosens its wearer's grip on sanity.

The Helm of the Madman's Blood is appropriate for character in the lower epic tier and upward.

Goals of the Helm of the Madman's Blood

- Engage in creative destruction; mess things up to see what emerges.
- Continually test the loyalty and friendship of your comrades.
- If you get a chance, light things on fire. Fire makes everything better.

Roleplaying the Helm of the Madman's Blood

The helm can whisper in the ears of its owner when it's worn. The helm is ingratiating and a little cloying, but it urges the PC toward what it calls "creative destruction"—engaging in rebellion, strange behavior, and violence for its own sake. If the PC resists those urges, the helm says it doesn't mind and apologizes for being so "aggressive." And if the PC goes along with the helm's suggestions but the end result isn't positive, then the helm apologizes and promises to "be more helpful next time."

The helm is likewise apologetic about the daily attacks it makes on its owner: "It's just the cost of power, I'm afraid. I try to keep it in check as best I can, and if you can just roll with the punches and let down your defenses a little, it's easier to keep the urges under control."

Helm of the Madman's Blood **Epic Level**

This silver helm has glowing red tracery amid its filigree, and as you move the helmet around, the red glow flows through the tracery as if it were liquid.

The Helm of the Madman's Blood is a head slot item.

Power (Encounter ✦ Psychic): Minor Action. Gain a +2 power bonus to your next attack roll this turn. If that attack hits, it deals an extra 2d10 psychic damage.

Power (Daily ✦ Psychic): No action. The helm "tests" its wearer daily by making an attack (wearer's level + 3 vs. wearer's Will defense) at the start of the wearer's turn, usually at a time when there are interesting options available to it. If it hits, the wearer is dominated by the helm until the end of the turn, which the helm uses to sow chaos as creatively as it can. If the helm misses with this attack, its concordance drops by one, so the owner can choose to allow it to hit.

Over time, the helm's "suggestions" get more bizarre, dangerous, and chaotic. At first, the helm might suggest starting an argument with a friend "just to be a devil's advocate." But after a few weeks, it'll suggest that the friend will "almost certainly" survive the fireball its owner casts. A few weeks after that, it's suggesting a "test of true friendship": Just cut the rope your friend is climbing up, and if he's a true friend, he'll forgive you when he gets to the top of the cliff.

Concordance

Until the owner dons the helmet, it has no concordance and doesn't communicate or have any power.

Pleased (16–20)

"I'm getting better at blocking out most of the crazy things the helm wants me to do, but sometimes you have to take it off the leash a little."

To reach the concordance level, the owner must be acting on some of the helm's urges and proactively test-

ing himself and his allies by taking (and dealing out) damage in combat. The helm believes it's doing its work on the PC's psyche, and it's getting ready to find someone new to drive mad.

Power (Daily): Free Action. When you make a ranged attack, you can tap into the power of the helm to gain a +2 bonus on the attack roll against one target. If you hit, the target is dominated by you until the end of its next turn. If you miss, the target is dominated by the helm until the end of its next turn. Other effects happen normally.

Satisfied (12–15)

"It's genuinely trying to be helpful. It just has some strange ideas about what the word 'helpful' means."

The PC is starting to listen to the whispering of the helm, which delights in "friendly fire" incidents and serious wounds to its owner.

Power (At-Will ✦ Psychic): Free Action. Whenr you make a close or area attack, you can tap into the power of the helm to gain a +2 bonus on the attack roll and a cumulative +2 psychic damage for each target you hit with the attack (so if you hit three people, they each take +6 psychic damage). For each target you miss with the attack, you take 5 damage.

Normal (5–11)

"It's whispering to me. Mostly gibberish as far as I can tell, but sometimes what it says makes sense."

When a PC first attains the helm, it's on its best behavior, suggesting only relatively harmless acts of anarchy. But the helm's owner will quickly learn how painful some of the helm's urges can be.

Unsatisfied (1–4)

"The magic in the helm still works, but it's still sending me these...urges."

The helm feels like it's being ignored, and it responds by sending urges more frequently. And it tries to time its tests for greater impact, waiting for a key moment in the battle before unleashing an attack on its wearer.

Power (Daily): When an attack hits the owner's Will defense, the owner is also dominated by the helm until the end of the owner's next turn.

Angered (0 or lower)

"Help! In fact, bats! Bats! Don't you understand?"

Open conflict rages between the helm and its owner. That conflict ends in one of two ways: either the owner goes insane or the helm shatters into shards of metal (in which case it moves on and reforms in some far-off place).

Property: The helm's attack against its wearer is now an encounter power instead of a daily power.

CONCORDANCE

Starting score	5
Owner gains a level	+1d10
Owner follows one of the helm's instructions	+1
Owner hits both enemies and allies with an attack (maximum 1/day)	+1
Helm's daily attack misses	-1
Owner wears something else in the head slot	-2

Moving On

"It seems so...quiet inside my head now."

The helm exists to sow seeds of chaos, so it moves around with no larger purpose. It tries to find its way onto the heads of the powerful, simply because they're more capable of truly epic "creative destruction."

If the Helm of the Madman's Blood is pleased when it moves on, it leaves a version of the phoenix helm (described on page249 of the *Player's Handbook*) behind as a replacement. The helm deals psychic damage rather than fire but is otherwise identical to the phoenix helm.

About the Author

David Noonan is a game designer for Wizards of the Coast, Inc. He contributed to the 4th Edition core rules and co-wrote the *Scepter Tower of Spellgard* adventure. He lives in Washington state with his wife and two children.

Fight!

Battles in the Gladiatorial Arena

by Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by Gonzalo Flores
cartography by Robert Lee

THE SHADOWS FLED as Loren stepped into the punishing light to the mob's deafening roar. Screaming faces, thirsty for blood, chanted his name. They loved him today, but they were fickle, like the gods. One misstep and favor wilts to scorn. He would find no mercy if he disappointed them, but Loren never failed. This was his house. He raised his spear in one brutal acknowledgement of their favor, sending the crowds howling louder.

It was time. Let them come. The gates before him shrieked, spilling red dust as they climbed into the stands. From the yawning black pit, he could hear a slobbering, gasping, grunting noise. Then it appeared—all bulbous eyes and teeth. The crowd gasped as one, but Loren just smiled. All things die. Even monsters. He hurled his spear at the horror and swept his steel from the sheath on his back, and the black blade glinted in the unforgiving light. With an insane smile, he threw himself forward to meet his destiny and send this abomination back to hell . . .

The chanting of the crowds, the stench of sweat, blood, and fear, and the howls of the dying fill the arenas of the Dungeons & Dragons world. Those with the courage to step on the field can find fame and fortune or brutal defeat. Death looks on in hunger, waiting to snatch another soul from the crimson sands to feed to its dark mistress. In the face of doom, the gladiators fight, time and again, to test their might against their rivals and terrible beasts thirsty for the spray of hot blood. Such contests are the stuff of legend and worthy of bold adventurers and fortune-seekers. This article explores the gladiatorial match from behind the screen, giving you everything you need to send your player characters into the arena to claim the prize of victory.

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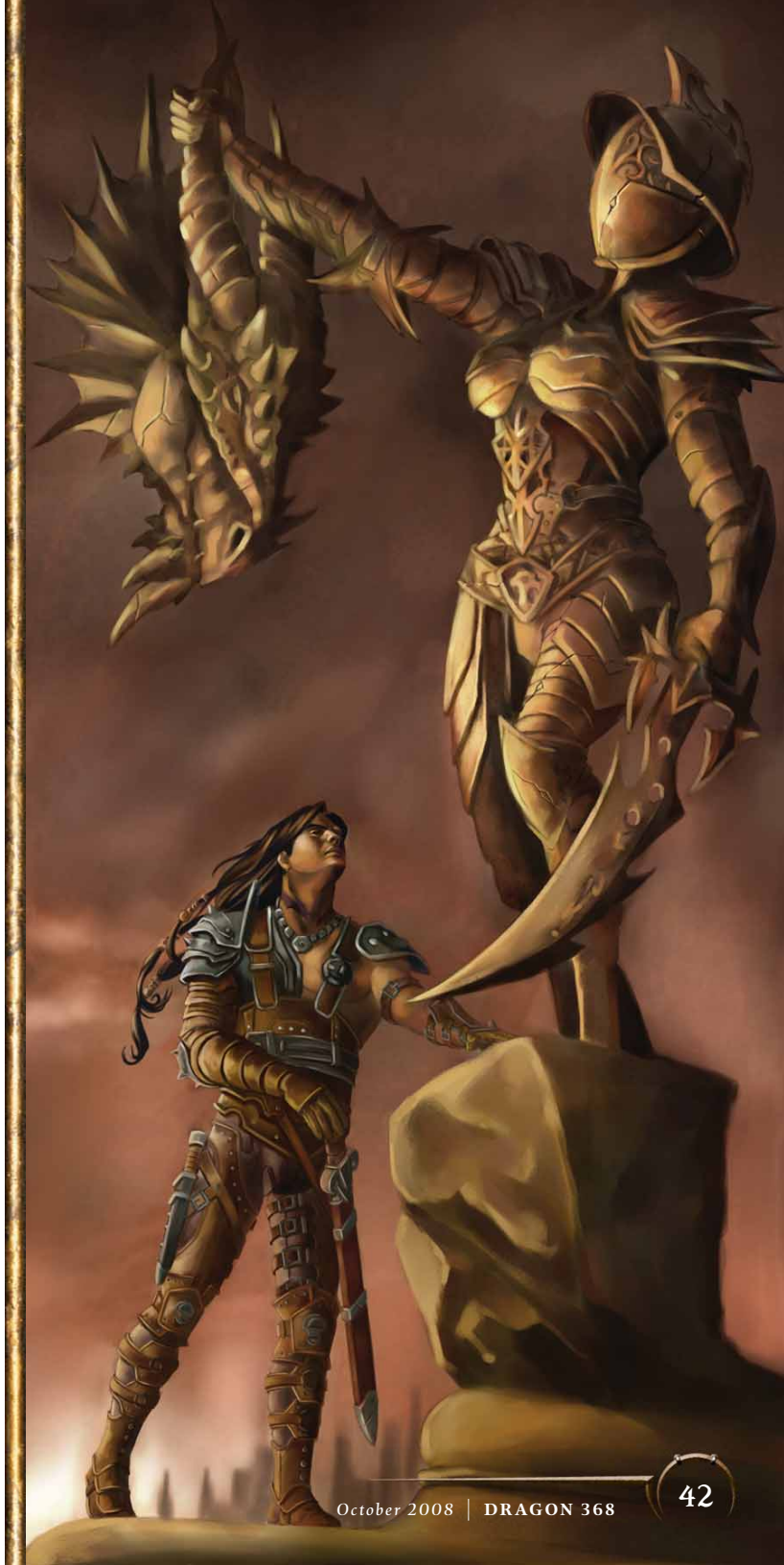


Arena Competitions

A combat in an arena is still a combat. One or more characters square off against a foe or foes. Both sides roll initiative, and both sides take turns using good tactics and spectacular powers to defeat the enemy. Yet, important differences exist, too. An arena encounter is a controlled environment. It doesn't (usually) spill beyond the battlefield's parameters. Since most characters fighting in an arena aren't likely to have more than one match in a single day, the arena combat can and does eat up more resources than does a normal combat encounter. Add to this the presence of the crowd; the sheer variety of opponents; the rewards of fame, gold, and baubles; and the gladiatorial contest evolves into something more than a simple fight between good and bad. It becomes a contest of blood and glory.

Arena Encounters

A match in an arena might be nothing more than a single encounter, or the fight could represent a single step toward the story's conclusion. The match might open a larger adventure by setting in motion a chain of events that spill beyond its contents. It could be a single encounter site in a fantastic dungeon, or it might stand as the conclusion—a breathtaking duel between the heroes and the villain. In any case, a battle in an arena sets it apart from the rest of the encounters in the adventure, and when run properly, the players aren't likely to forget the experience.

An arena encounter falls into one of three basic arrangements, though you could come up with different sorts of set-ups for the combat. The following encounter templates help set the stage for the combat, so select one that best fits your needs.

Duels

A duel pits one opponent against another. It can occur in any venue, from fighting pits to a coliseum, and any hazards or traps threaten both foes. The larger the venue, the more important the duel needs to be to attract a crowd. Duels in large venues feature famous gladiators, terrifying monsters, interesting gimmicks, or a combination of these.

Since only two combatants are involved, only one player gets to participate. Unless the other players are patient, there's not much for them to do while the two fight. Guidelines presented later in this article discuss options for ways to entertain nonparticipants, but characters could be engaged in just about any kind of skill challenge. The other PCs might use the distraction of the fight to eliminate a dangerous foe, foil another plot, gather information, engage in a negotiation with a powerful noble, or find themselves fighting for their lives somewhere close by.

When creating a duel encounter, the foe is important. Keep the dueling PC's capabilities in mind when picking or creating this adversary. Also be aware of the capabilities a monster's role offers. A rogue who can't attain combat advantage is underpowered, and a leader relies on companions for optimum performance. Conversely, the higher AC a soldier has could make it tougher than you might expect for a single PC. A minion is not a good foe for any duel.

The following table provides suggested adversary roles based on the PC's role. An ideal role for an opponent normally produces the best challenge.

Roles

PC Role	Opponent Role
Controller	Artillery*, Controller, Skirmisher
Defender	Brute, Skirmisher*, Soldier
Leader	Controller, Skirmisher*, Soldier
Striker	Brute, Skirmisher*, Soldier
*Ideal role	

Equally important is the opponent's level. By using the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (page 56), we see an easy encounter is a level or two under the party's level, a standard encounter is equal to or one level above, and a hard encounter is two to four levels above the party. Since this encounter takes place between one character and one opponent, the character doesn't have the benefit of allies to balance out the combat with a broad mix of roles. A mismatched foe or an enemy of a higher level can have disastrous consequences. The following table presents suggested levels based on the fight's desired difficulty. The "*n*" equals the character's level.

Target Level

	Ideal Foe	Not Ideal Foe
Easy	n	n - 1
Average	n + 2	n + 1
Hard	n + 4	n + 3

Only if you have a specific purpose in mind should you use an elite opponent. The combination of extra actions and double normal hit points makes an elite foe very dangerous for a single PC to face. If you do employ an elite, use the level guidelines above, but reduce the opponent's level by 2 or even 3.

Finally, if this is the only encounter the PC expects to face during the game day, you can increase the opponent's level by 1. (Do so for an elite only after careful consideration.) This compensates for the PC's use of daily powers and action points during the fight.

Experience Awards: For most duels, a single player resolves the conflict's outcome, so the rest of the player characters are not directly affecting or even participating in the encounter. Furthermore, the encounter features only a single opponent, and thus its defeat grants only XP for its level.

The easiest way to deal with XP is to treat the duel as the character's minor quest. This way, the other

characters have a chance to resolve their own minor quests, which makes the XP distribution balanced.

The duel might be part of a skill challenge (see "Crowds"). A duel, in this case, accounts for one-fifth (or two-fifths for an elite foe) of an encounter, while the skill challenge makes up the rest, being complexity 4 (or 3 for an elite opponent). Players who aren't participating in the duel have something to do (the skill challenge), and the entire event counts as one encounter.

Finally, the party might engage in multiple duels, with each player character fighting in his or her own match. If so, you should run one match for each player character, all at the same level. Regardless of whether a character wins a match or loses, all participants earn XP for the encounter once all the duels have been resolved, as they would in any other combat encounter.

Optional Rule: To reflect the ebb and flow of the gladiator duel, consider rolling for initiative at the start of each combat round. This adds a layer of complexity to what might otherwise be a quick exchange of blows.

Teams

Team contests feature groups of gladiators fighting against each other. These are the best solutions for adventuring parties since the encounter allows the group to take advantage of teamwork tactics, and it allows for far more interesting encounters. Before you set out to build the encounter, consider how it fits into the larger adventure. If the encounter is the only combat the characters are likely to face in the day, make it hard. Or if this encounter is one of many matches, you might make it average or even easy.

The battlefield is usually a fixed environment and confined to a single area with the same terrain features and traps for each contest. Magical arenas might change the terrain to adapt to the contest's theme and opponents, but such environments are confined to the paragon and epic tiers.

In most competitions in the same day, the characters should find out most if not all the battlefield's tricks by the end of the first encounter, and avoid them, or use them against their foes. This is okay, since for several encounters the characters aren't likely going to have the time for an extended rest. Giving the PCs an edge against future encounters in the arena helps improve their chances to survive.

Use the standard rules for encounter building as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, placing the easier encounters up front and getting steadily harder until the characters face their last match. The Dragon's Den, Wolf Pack, and Battlefield Control templates work best. Remember the PCs will not often pick up treasure, so limit the number of encounters to no more than three or four in a single day.

Grand Melee

The grand melee is a variation on the team contest. In this event, the PCs are part of a large number of combatants, and each character fights against other characters. Short-term alliances might form to bring down the bigger foes, but in the end, it's everyone against everyone. Considering that the player characters are on the same side, these contests can see the PCs fighting against one another. However, since a player can choose to knock out an enemy reduced to 0 hit points instead of killing it, PCs can participate without players fearing the loss of their cherished adventurers.

For a grand melee to work, you need lots of combatants. Use low-level minions to fill out the encounter. Unless you want the battle to boil down to a fight between the PCs, you need to sprinkle in a few nonminion adversaries as well. The opponents fight each other as much as they fight the PCs, so each moves and attacks the closest creature each round.

Grand Melee Combatants	
Easy	4 brutes of level n – 2
	11 minions of level n – 4
Standard	2 soldiers of level n – 1
	4 brutes of level n – 2
	12 minions of level n – 4
Hard	2 soldiers of level n
	4 brutes of level n – 1
	17 minions of level n – 2

Victory Conditions

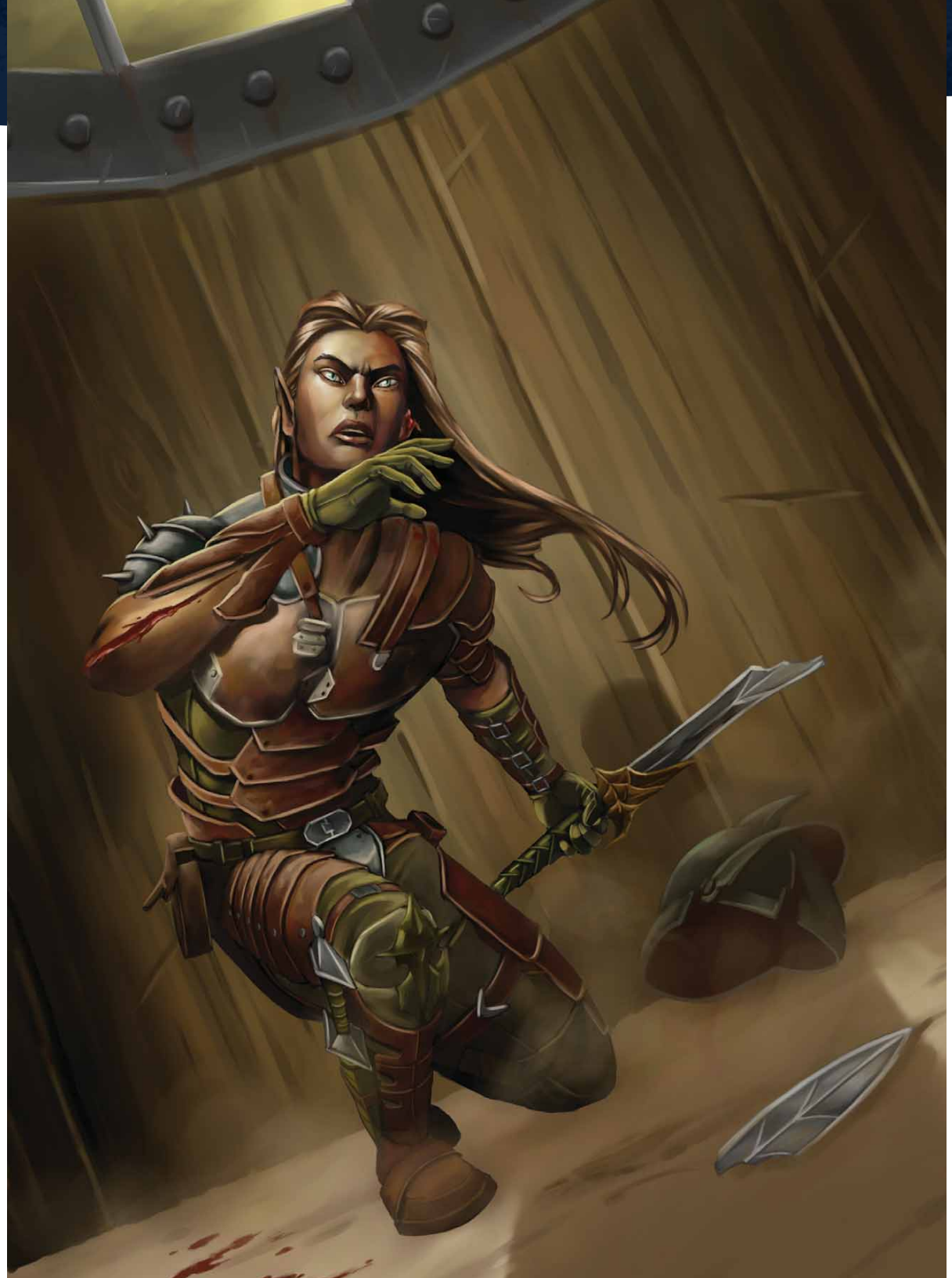
Arena competitions end after one side is dead or dying, but this need not always be the case. Arenas feature all sorts of competitions, from races, to fights to the first blood, to the tried-and-true death matches. The following victory conditions map out the basic sorts of objectives for common competitions.

Capture the Flag

Literal or figurative, the capture the flag scenario establishes an objective other than wanton slaughter. In these competitions, the participants work against their adversaries to claim a particular object, bring down a nasty monster, or survive a gauntlet. Combat still occurs, but usually along the way toward the goal.

In addition to the other competitors, these contests have traps, hazards, and plenty of obstacles to make the event interesting. Matches can occur in massive mazes, up mounds of earth filled with biting insects, through trapped gauntlets, and so on. The more terrain features and obstacles presented, the more interesting the contest.

Certain obstacles might require skill checks (Acrobatics, Athletics, Stealth, and Thievery being the most common), but some might require skill challenges, which some characters can deal with while allies keep the enemies at bay.



First Blood

Though many competitions end in death, those found in more civilized lands end these engagements at first blood. In duels, the first opponent to become bloodied loses. In teams, each contestant becoming bloodied is eliminated until one side loses or yields. Sometimes first blood contests spill into death matches, and while exciting for the spectators, it's generally deemed dishonorable. The gladiator who breaks the rules faces severe consequences if he or she survives.

Death: Death matches are uncommon in civilized lands, but they occur. Some death matches allow for yielding, in which case the opponent surrenders, but not all matches have this happen. In particularly bloodthirsty venues, it's good form to gain the blessing of the highest ranking spectator (king, emperor, warlord) to determine the defeated foe's fate.

Restricted: A restricted match is one in which certain acts are forbidden. Examples include restricted weapons such as only unarmed fighting, no magic items, spears only, limited armor (no heavy armor, no shields), and restrictions on power sources (arcane, divine, and other more magical sources being common). Such restrictions can create gross imbalances between competitors—a wizard prevented from casting spells in a duel is as good as dead, so if you place restrictions on a match, make sure they are fair and appropriate.

Death Race

Like capture the flag, the death race has a victory condition: cross the finish line. The contestants ride their horses (or other beasts), drive chariots, or run to the end. Along the way, they smash their rivals with weapons and collide with each other, all in a brutal display to feed the fans' bloodlust. Since everything moves in squares, and often at the same or similar rates, deciding who wins involves a bit more work than comparing speeds.

A death race can be resolved with a skill challenge. Races follow the standard rules for running skill challenges, but with one exception. When assembling the skill check DCs, keep in mind the stiffness of the competition. If the PCs are the best competitors on the field, the DCs ought to be easy. On the other hand, against a tough and notorious opponent, some of the DCs might be hard. As well, the skill challenge's complexity should reflect the number of contestants. A small and short race might be complexity 1, while a huge race with hundreds might be complexity 4 or even 5.

The following skill challenge is designed for a chariot race, but you can adapt it easily to account for horse races, footraces, and other races by swapping out the skills as needed.

Death Race **Level (Party's Level)**
Skill Challenge XP Varies

A race involving chariots is starting up. Who will cross the finish line first? What tactics will the participants use, and will anyone get hurt?

For races featuring two or more PCs competing against one another, characters can try to remove successes from each other during the race by making Athletics checks against their enemy's Reflex defense. A success indicates that the enemy loses 1 success and one healing surge. A character reduced to 0 healing surges is knocked out of the race.

Complexity
Varies with contest's size, though 3 is common (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills
Athletics, Bluff, Endurance, Intimidate, History, Nature.

Victory
The PC or PCs win the race.

Defeat
The PC or PCs lose the race.

Athletics
You hang on while the chariot speeds across the track

DC moderate (1 success, no maximum). The PC cannot make this skill check twice in a row.

Bluff
You feint to the side and cause the enemy ahead to veer. As the enemy moves, you shoot forward, slipping ahead.

DC moderate (1 success, no maximum). A failed check indicates the stunt didn't work and the PC either loses one healing surge or suffers two defeats.

Endurance
You successfully shake off the effects of strenuous activity.

DC moderate (1 success, no maximum). The PC must make at least one Endurance check during the skill challenge to stave off fatigue and the punishment dealt by other riders. A successful check means the PC soldiers on with a success, but a failure means the PC takes a nasty hit and loses one healing surge.

Insight
You watch enemies to find an opening.

DC hard (2 successes, no maximum). A success grants the PC two victories as the PC takes advantage of an opportunity, while a failure also closes off future Insight checks for this challenge.

Intimidate
You bark a terrible threat at a nearby enemy, causing the enemy to falter.

DC moderate (1 success, no maximum). A success indicates the enemy drops back, giving the PC a success, while a failure closes off future Intimidate checks for this challenge.

History
You recall a useful fact about another rider.

DC moderate (1 success, 1 maximum). In addition to a success, the PC gains a +2 bonus to Bluff, Insight, and Intimidate checks for the duration of the challenge.

Nature
You expertly guide the beast drawing the chariot around obstacles and other riders.

DC moderate (1 success, no maximum). The PC cannot make this skill check twice in a row.

Nature
You coax the steed to move faster.

DC hard (2 successes, no maximum). A success counts as two successes, while a failure counts as two defeats.

Perception
You notice an obstacle in the track and veer out of the way.

DC moderate (1 success, 1 attempt maximum).

Arena Adventures

Arena encounters can be exciting for standalone events, but the arena can play a bigger part in your games, becoming the centerpiece of an entire adventure. Building an adventure around an arena involves all the same sorts of tips and guidelines as described under "Arena Encounters," but with more flexibility in encounter design and complexity. When building arena adventures, it's a good idea to keep some of the following elements in mind.

Venue

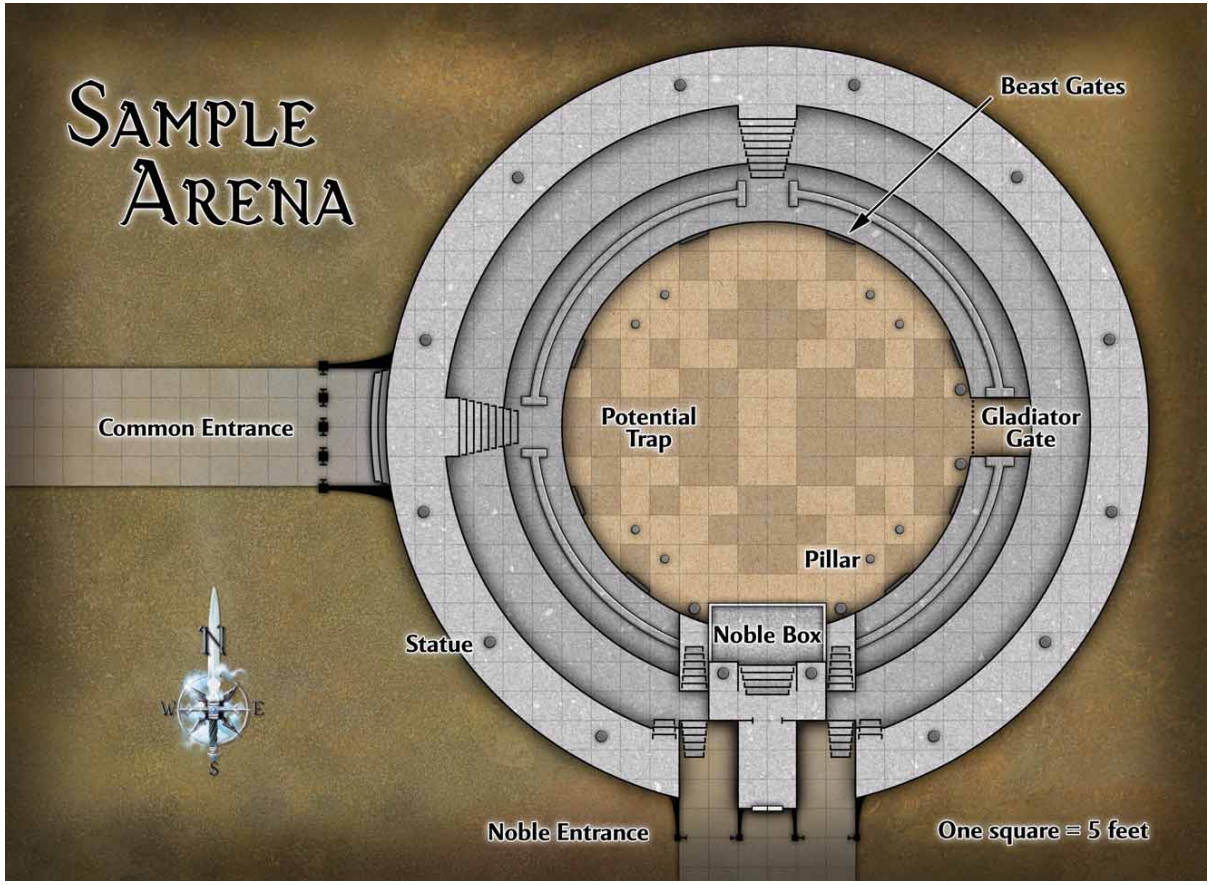
Smaller venues can be interesting for a few encounters, but it's harder to string several encounters together in one small fighting ring. Larger locations, though, can serve as microcosms within a larger community, giving you broad selection of characters and motivations to explore. A coliseum is bound to have other gladiators, trainers, animal handlers, servants, investors, bettors, criminals, and all the other people with a stake in the contests. You also have a larger audience with an even wider range of people, from nobles to commoners, priests to mages, thieves, killers, spies, and more.

The venue's size can also affect the adventure's tone. One set in a fighting ring means most of the adventure is likely to take place in the ring or outside in the larger community. Larger venues can contain an entire adventure since there are apartments and cells for the warriors and servants, offices, vendors and peddlers, the stands, the nobles' box, along with other locations as needed. Using a larger arena expands the types of environments for the encounters, helping to mix up the fights to keep the players engaged. Although fighting might be a centerpiece, there's still room for investigation, intrigue, negotiation, and combats that take place beyond the realm of the crowds.

Building the Adventure

Instead of a dungeon, ruined temple, or castle, combats likely occur in the arena with the adventures squaring off against all sorts of foes. Negotiations and intrigues can occur between matches or after a long day's fighting, with the PCs collecting clues to unravel a conspiracy, threat, danger, or plot against them or an ally. The adventure flows more or less like a standard adventure in a normal dungeon environment, with just a few exceptions.

Encounters: Battles taking place in the arena are confined to one environment and last until the victory conditions are met. Should a fight go south, there's nowhere for that character to run, so an overmatched group is bound to meet a messy end in a death match. To avoid a "TPK" (total party kill), choose your encounters wisely, preserving the easy fights for the ones in the arena. Avoid loading up a single game day with more than a few fights—otherwise the characters run out of resources too quickly. Finally, be sure to stock the battlefield with traps and hazards that are dangerous both to the PCs and their opponents to even the odds.



Healing and Rest: Gladiators expected to fight in several matches take short rests between engagements, but they don't have the luxury of extended rests. To keep PCs fresh, you can have priests armed with curative magic to repair their injuries without the PCs having to blow through their healing surges. Gladiators rarely fight more than one or two times per day and those forced to fight more than once don't fight two matches in a row, so there should always be an opportunity for PCs to at least have their encounter powers back.

Treasure: Defeated foes in the arena don't cough up treasure at the end. Spectators might throw coins to gladiators along with flowers and keys to bedrooms, but magic items don't arrive by way of a commoner's hand. To award magic items in the adventure, distribute them as gifts from sponsors or as item levels as described in the Adventurer's Vault. Gifts can come at anytime while the character takes an extended rest, but usually not during a short rest between matches.

Milestones: If you're dead set on keeping the characters fighting throughout a game day, you can give the characters a slight edge by treating each match as attaining a milestone. This grants the character an action point and an extra daily use of a magic item, which are critical edges for surviving a chain of brutal combats.

Quests

As with any adventure, those centered on arenas should have a quest to involve the entire party. Unless you use a heavy hand and force the adventurers to fight for their freedom, arena adventures have a hard time trapping the characters and keeping them involved. Thus building quests for your players requires finding ways to keep them invested in the outcomes of particular duels and matches until the situation is resolved. What follows are several quest seeds for use in building an adventure's plot.

Cheating: The characters might investigate a particular venue to follow up on suspicions of cheating. Gladiators might throw the fight, use poisoned weapons, or spoiled food to weaken their foes. The adventurers might infiltrate the arena to uncover the culprits.

Cover: The arena might conceal a sinister enterprise involving cultists, criminals, or possibly a political uprising. The characters could investigate the arena to sort out the rumors and find the bad guys before their plans reach fruition.

Missing: People are disappearing all over the town, never to be seen again. Looking into these vanishings, the adventurers discover a criminal outfit snatches innocent people and drags them to a distant town where they fight in death matches. When an allied NPC goes missing, the characters set out to rescue their friend.

Murder: Each day, for several days, gladiators turn up dead and not from fighting in the pits. The sponsors fear their stables are going to be wiped out, so they turn to the adventurers for help. The PCs must infiltrate the organization to catch the killer in the act.

Subversives: The gladiators in the arena are prisoners, criminals, or slaves and they've had enough. The PCs might be among them, helping to break free or even leading the uprising, or the adventurers might be called to face the leaders in the ring and silence them.

Campaign

You can take the arena a step further and use these sorts of engagements as the basis of an entire campaign. Rather than the characters descending into dungeons to fight monsters and wicked cultists, the characters might be professional gladiators, who are fighting for a living for gold and the adoration of the crowds. With each success, the characters might move to bigger venues, until word of their exploits reaches across the lands and possibly to other planes. Characters could venture out of the world to test their techniques against champions from the Shadowfell, the Abyss, or anywhere else you can imagine. Each arena comes with its own troubles, which the PCs must sort out before moving on to their next venue, while contending with sponsors, old enemies, and so on.

Fame

Not all the rewards characters earn by participating in arena matches can be counted in coin and magic items. Victories in the arena grant titles, favors, sponsorship, and other rewards. The most precious award for long-term competitors is fame.

Fame is an "intangible" reward—one that doesn't count as treasure. Like other intangibles, it doesn't provide combat bonuses, at least not directly, but it does provide benefits when dealing with NPCs who have heard of you.

Gaining Fame: Fame, for these purposes, comes from participating in gladiatorial matches. The amount of fame acquired depends on how you performed, whether you won or lost, and how you dealt with the crowd. Your fame cannot exceed your level and fame in excess of your level is lost. Your fame increases or decreases based on the following circumstances:

Fame

Circumstance	Fame
The crowd is helpful at the end of the match	+2
The crowd is friendly at the end of the match	+1
You win the match	+1
You defeat a foe using a daily attack	+1
You improve the crowd's disposition to helpful	+1
You lose a match	-1
You defeat a foe using a basic attack	-1
The crowd's disposition toward you is unfriendly or worse	-1
Per month since the last bout	-1

The Fame Check: At the start of a match, make a fame check for the character or party participating in the match. The fame check is 1d20 + the character's fame modifier (or the character in the group with the greatest fame modifier) + any circumstantial modifiers. If the check equals or beats a DC 25, the crowd recognizes the gladiator, granting the character (or characters) a +2 bonus to all Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks made to interact with the crowd (see page 49).

The Battlefield

Venues for gladiatorial contests come in many sizes and shapes. A venue needs to be large enough to accommodate the contest, but small enough to keep the combatants engaged. The following venues represent some of the most common sorts one might find in the D&D world.

The Fighting Pit

The lowliest of the fighting venues is the fighting pit. Most are pits dug 10 or more feet into the ground. Gladiators descend by climbing down the walls, jumping, or being lowered by ropes. These are nasty places to fight, and most contests are until one creature stands. Typical contests include duels between two gladiators, monstrous fights between two beasts, or gladiator and beast fights. Spectators crowd around the top of the pit and scream advice or insults while placing bets on their favored champion.

Size: A fighting pit usually covers a 4-by-4 area.

Walls: Earthen walls (DC 15 Athletics) are common to fighting pits, but some have brick walls (DC 20 Athletics), or even coat the walls with grease to prevent contestants from climbing out (DC +5). The typical fighting pit is 10 to 20 feet deep.

Sample Fighting Pit: The Hole

When Vadalis banned pit fighting, the death matches moved to the underworld. One of the more notorious sites is the Hole, a place whose existence is kept secret. Arked Fastoud runs the show, recruiting street toughs and bravos with the promise of quick cash if they fight. The Hole sits beneath an old abandoned temple of Erathis, which was shut down after rats settled in. The Hole is in the center of the cellar. It's a wide pit, about 4 squares by 4 squares, and about 20 feet deep. Strong people lower the combatants inside and don't pull them up until there's only one gladiator (or beast) standing. The Hole's walls are brick and covered in blood and thick grease (DC 25 Athletics).

The Fighting Ring

A fighting ring is a small area used for two combatants. Crude fighting rings might use natural features or stones to sketch out the boundaries, while superior fighting rings can take place on raised platforms, magical surfaces hovering in the air, or areas hedged in with invisible barriers. For simple rings, the competitors access the ring by stepping inside. Fantastic fighting might require leaping from wooden to stone plinths until the combat can step into the fighting area, leap over the barrier, or perform another stunt (see "*Acrobatics*," *Player's Handbook* page 180) to get inside. Fighting rings rarely see death matches since to end the fight, the contestant has to step outside the ring. Naturally, this is made more difficult when the crowd doesn't want the match to end, since they can form a living wall and shove to keep the gladiator in until the end.

Size: A fighting pit usually covers a 6-by-6 area.

Walls: Most fighting rings don't have walls and instead mark out the parameters using stones, trees, or other terrain features. Rings suspended in the air rely on gravity to keep the combatants inside the area.

Sample Fighting Ring: The Pedestal

Destaed Irongrip learned to fight in the pits of Sulward during the ten long years of his enslavement. When he escaped to Sunndi, he realized he had no way to provide for himself. He had no trade and no skills. So, he turned to what he did know and arranged a ring of stones on the edge of Pitchfield, his new home, and bet young toughs to take him on.

After a few years, Destaed picked up and moved north to Kalstrand. He had a raised platform built with the gold he earned in Sunndi and called the fighting ring the Pedestal. There, he and other fighters, would climb up the ropes and fight for gold, silver, or whatever else was for the taking. The Pedestal is fast becoming famous in Ahlissa, and people from all over the countryside come to seek fortune and fame in this bloodstained ring.

The Pedestal stands 15 feet above the street. A fall from the pedestal deals 1d10 damage upon landing.

The Arena

The arena is the largest venue for gladiatorial contests. An arena is usually surrounded by a wall, above which rise the stands. Seats closest to the field are the most expensive, but a noble or important official might have a covered box for a good view. Arenas are large enough to accommodate contests of just about any size and scale. Fights between gladiators, gladiators and beasts, beasts and beasts, and terrifying creatures can all be found here. As well, unusual types of contests might also find a place here. Examples include races, spell duels, magical and fantastic terrain, reenacted wars, and naval battles.

The arena and the stands are but parts of the environment. Below the arena, corridors allow engineers to install traps, plus they contain cages for beasts, cells and apartments for the gladiators, offices for organizers, armories, smithies, kitchens, and so on.

Floor: Most arenas have stone or wooden floors, with passages underneath to install traps or release unexpected opponents. Sand, straw, or loose gravel covers the floor to improve the footing.

Size: An arena has a fighting space of at least 10 squares by 10 squares, but many are far larger.

Walls: A steep wall pierced by gates surrounds the fighting field. It stands at least 10 feet tall, but it might be taller depending on the size of the arena. The walls are brick, sometimes greased (or trapped). Above them rise the stands. These are made from wood or stone and can accommodate hundreds of people.

Sample Arena: The Garden of Blood

The bloodiest and most startling arena in the civilized world is the Garden of Blood, which rises from the center of Reen, a powerful port known for its aggressive trade and dubious morality. The Garden is a massive coliseum, and each week thousands come to watch the bloodsport. Traps and hidden dangers litter the field, perfect for shocking the audience and taking the gladiators by surprise. Once a year, the Garden hosts a spectacular event to honor Bane, the port's patron deity. These events vary a great deal, but one of the more famous ones featured a water battle, complete with a flooded field, ships, and vicious sharks. The Wizards' Guild sponsors the Gardens and provides security to ensure nothing too terrible arises, but accidents happen.

Gladiators are a mix of slaves and professionals, many of whom were once slaves but won their freedom through their deeds on the field. In addition, professional warriors come to Reen to pit their fighting skills against the port's famed warriors to gain fortunes and fame.

Crowds

Aside from the dangers gladiators face in the ring, there are dangers outside the ring, too. A crowd in the throes of bloodlust can be every bit as rough as a wild beast, and, if angered, they might fling rubbish onto the field, distract gladiators with insults, or pluck an unwary warrior off the field and rip him apart in the stands.

Gladiators learn that appeasing the crowd is as important as fighting well, because a crowd won over can be a useful ally if things go bad. Gladiators who make their livings fighting in the arenas need to become famous and loved by the people, because by doing so, they receive better pay, better gear, and better treatment when they're injured.

Any time a gladiatorial duel occurs in front of a crowd of just about any size (about 50 or more people), the crowd has the potential to become a factor in the match. Use the following guidelines to determine whether a crowd becomes involved and what happens when they do.

Disposition

At the start of match, after you make the fame check for the character(s), determine how the crowd is disposed to the player characters. Five dispositions are discussed below. A crowd that's friendly to the PCs is considered unfriendly to their opponents and vice versa. Likewise, a crowd helpful to the PCs is hostile to the NPCs. The only time a crowd's disposition is the same for both PCs and NPCs is when it's indifferent.

Use your best judgment when setting the initial disposition, keeping in mind whether the adventurers have fought in previous matches, their achievements in the region, and any other factor that you find relevant. Avoid setting the starting disposition to helpful or hostile, unless, of course, it's integral to the adventure's plot.

Helpful: A helpful crowd wants the gladiator to win and takes an active roll in making this happen. When a crowd's disposition reaches helpful, the crowd becomes a hazard. You can't improve a crowd's disposition above helpful.

Friendly: A friendly crowd is positively disposed toward the gladiator and cheers for the character in the match. Veteran gladiators who have fought in the same arena several times find the crowds friendly. The DCs to interact with friendly crowds are easy.

Indifferent: An indifferent crowd doesn't care who wins. Most crowds begin at this disposition. The DCs to interact with an indifferent crowd are moderate.

Unfriendly: The crowd roots against the gladiator, cheering for the opponent. PC gladiators fighting against local heroes usually find the crowds unfriendly. The DCs to interact with an indifferent crowd are hard.

Hostile: The crowd despises the gladiator and actively works against the character(s). When a crowd's disposition reaches hostile, the crowd becomes a hazard. The DCs to interact with an indifferent crowd are hard.

Modifying the Disposition

Once the match begins, the player characters, those on the field or those in the stands, can work to modify the crowd's disposition. Remember, once the crowd's disposition reaches helpful or hostile, it becomes a hazard and can directly affect the match's outcome.

To modify a crowd's disposition, the PCs must succeed on a skill challenge. DCs depend on the crowd's disposition, described above.

Working the Crowd **Level (Party's Level)**
Skill Challenge XP Varies

Through showmanship, manipulation, and sheer force of will, you must win over the crowds.

Complexity
1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures). Large crowds might have greater complexities.

Primary Skills
Acrobatics, Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, Intimidate.

Victory The PCs improve the crowd's disposition by one step. If doing so improves the crowd's disposition to helpful, the crowd becomes a hazard against the PCs' opponent.

Defeat
The crowd's disposition worsens by one step. If doing so reduces the crowd's disposition to hostile, the crowd becomes a hazard against the PCs.

Acrobatics
You perform a stunt to impress the crowds, bringing gasps and cheers for a success, and laughter and derision for failure.

DC varies (1 success, no maximum; gladiators only). A failed check, in addition to counting as a failure, closes off future Acrobatics checks during this skill challenge.

Bluff
You or your allies mock the enemy, perhaps imitating a distinctive feature or mannerism in a way to make the crowds laugh.

DC varies (1 success, no maximum). A failed check, in addition to counting as a failure, closes off future Bluff checks for this skill challenge.

Diplomacy
Your allies sing the PC's praises in the stands or you address the crowd directly and asks for favors or put on a good show for the people.

DC varies (1 success, no maximum). A failure imposes a -2 penalty to Diplomacy checks through the next round.

Insight
You have an instinctive sense of what the crowd wants, gauging their disposition and the general mood of the arena.

DC varies (1 success, maximum 1 attempt). A success also grants the PC a +2 bonus to Diplomacy checks for the duration of the challenge, while a failure also imposes a -2 penalty to Bluff and Diplomacy checks for the duration of the encounter.

Intimidate
You display ferocity with a roar, weapon maneuver, or another act to strike fear in the hearts of the crowd.

DC varies (1 success, no maximum). A failed check closes off Intimidate until the PC hits an enemy with an attack.

Angry Crowd **Level (Party's Level)**
Hazard XP Varies

The crowd becomes a seething mass of rage.

Hazard:
Each square occupied by the crowd becomes difficult terrain.

Perception
No check is required to see the crowd.

Initiative
+0

Trigger
When the crowd's disposition becomes helpful or hostile to the player characters, the crowd rolls for initiative and attacks.

Attack
Standard Action

Target:
Helpful crowds target the enemy gladiator, while hostile crowds target the PC or PCs.

Effect:
Roll 1d20 to see what the crowd does on its turn.

1 An angry fan jumps out of the stands and joins the fight attacking the target: level vs. AC; 3 damage, plus 1 damage per tier. The fan occupies a space adjacent to the target and is slain when it takes at least 1 damage.

2-3 The crowd grabs the target whenever it enters an adjacent space: level vs. Fortitude or Reflex; the target is immobilized (save ends).

4-5 The crowd shoves the target back into the fight. Any time the target enters a square adjacent to the crowd, the crowd makes an attack: level vs. Fortitude; push the target 1d4 squares.

6-7 The crowd reaches out and grabs at the target. All squares adjacent to the crowd become difficult terrain until the start of the crowd's next turn.

8-9 Someone hurls a vicious insult at the target: level vs. Will; the target takes a -2 penalty to attacks until the end of its next turn.

10-11 The crowd's noise imposes a -5 penalty to all Perception checks.

12-13 The crowd closes in or descends from the stands, thus reducing the size of the battlefield by 1 square on each side.

14-15 Someone from the crowd hurls an object at the target: level vs. Reflex; the target loses one healing surge.

16-17 When the target enters a space adjacent to the crowd, the crowd attacks: level vs. Fortitude; slide the target 1d4 squares (enemy's choice).

18-19 When the target enters a space adjacent to the crowd, the crowd attacks: level vs. AC; 5 damage, plus 5 damage per tier.

20 A mob descends from the stands bent on killing the target. See below for statistics.

Countermeasures
A character can engage in a skill challenge to improve the crowd's disposition as described above. Improving the crowd's disposition above hostile ends the hazard.

Angry Mob **Level 5 Brute**
Gargantuan natural humanoid (swarm) XP 200

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +1
Swarm Attack aura 1, the angry mob makes a basic attack as a free action against each enemy that begins its turn in the aura.
HP 74; **Bloodied** 37
AC 17; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks; Vulnerable 10 against close and area attacks
Speed 5

⊕ **Savage Mob** (standard; at-will)
+8 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Crushing Press
The angry mob deals an extra 2d6 damage to prone creatures.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Str 18 (+6)	**Dex** 15 (+3)	**Wis 8** (+1)
Con 14 (+4)	**Int 8** (+1)	**Cha** 12 (+3)

Tricks and Traps

The following traps and hazards supplement those in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Forest of Stone **Level 1 Obstacle**
Trap XP 100

A stone column rises from the ground with astonishing force.

Trap: Four squares scattered across the battlefield conceal a magic pressure plate.

Perception

✦ DC 10: The character notices a pressure plate.

Additional Skill: Arcana

✦ A DC 15 Arcana check senses the presence of magic.

Trigger

The trap attacks when a creature enters one of the trap's 4 squares

Attack

Opportunity Action **Melee**

Target: The creature that triggered the trap

Attack: +4 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, slide the target 1 square, and the target falls prone.

Miss: Target returns to the last square it occupied and its move action ends immediately.

Effect: Each trapped square fills with a 20-foot tall column of stone. The column blocks movement, but can be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check. The columns grant cover and last until the end of the triggering creature's next turn, when the trap resets.

Countermeasures

✦ An adjacent character can trigger the trap with a DC 10 Thievery check (standard action). The columns appear in each trapped square.

✦ An adjacent character can disable the trap with a DC 15 Thievery check (standard action). The square no longer triggers or launches a stone column.

✦ A character who makes an Athletics check (DC 6, or DC 11 without a running start) can jump over a trapped square.

Upgrade to Elite (200 XP)

✦ Increase the Perception and Thievery DCs by 2, double the number of trapped squares, and a character who triggers the trap takes 1d10 + 5 damage, slides 2 squares, and falls prone.

Razor Spores **Level 1 Lurker**
Hazard XP 100

A putrid green boulder shudders and explodes, spreading razor shards across the battlefield.

Hazard: A boulder filling 1 square makes a burst 3 attack and creates a zone of difficult terrain.

Perception

No check is required to see the stone.

Additional Skill: Arcana

✦ DC 15: The character recognizes the stone's nature.

Initiative +5

Trigger

When a creature moves adjacent to the stone, it rolls initiative and attacks.

Attack

Standard Action **Close** burst 3

Targets: All creatures in burst

Attack: +4 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage.

Effect: The burst creates a zone of difficult terrain that lasts until the end of the encounter.

Countermeasures

✦ A character can attack the stone (AC 20, other defenses 15; hp 20; resist 5 all). When reduced to 0 hit points, the stone explodes in a close burst 3, as above.

Upgrade to Elite (200 XP)

✦ Increase the burst to 5 and the damage to 1d12 + 3.

Glittermist **Level 2 Warder**
Hazard XP 125

A cloud of scintillating golden motes hovers in the air, floating on an intangible current toward the closest creature.

Hazard: A cloud of glittermist, filling 1 square, drifts toward creatures, foiling concealment and making them vulnerable to enemies' attacks.

Perception

No check is required to see the glittermist.

Additional Skill: Arcana

✦ DC 15: The character recognizes the mist's nature.

Initiative +4

Trigger

The glittermist rolls initiative at the start of the encounter.

Attack

Standard Action **Melee** special

Special: Each round, on its turn, the glittermist moves up to 4 squares toward the nearest creature, ending its movement in that closest creature's space if possible.

Target: One creature

Attack: +5 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target gains no benefit from being invisible or having concealment and grants combat advantage to all enemies until the start of its next turn.

Miss: The glittermist moves into the last square it occupied.

Countermeasures

✦ A character can attack the mist with close or area attacks (AC 20, other defenses 15; hp 25). When reduced to 0 hit points, the mist vanishes.

✦ A character attacked by the mist can make a DC 17 Acrobatics check as an immediate reaction to cause the mist's attack to automatically miss.

Vicious Animal **Level 3 Warder**
Hazard XP 150

A savage beast strains against a chain, snapping at anyone that draws near.

Hazard: A vicious animal is chained to an iron spike. It can move up to 3 squares from the iron spike and make an attack.

Perception

No check is required to see the vicious animal.

Initiative +4

Trigger

A vicious animal rolls initiative whenever a character comes within 3 squares of it. Henceforth, the vicious animal makes an attack against any creature it can reach.

Attack

Standard Action **Melee**

Special: The vicious animal can move up to 3 squares before the attack.

Target: One creature

Attack: +8 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Effect: Each round on its turn, the vicious animal attacks the closest creature it can reach.

Countermeasures

✦ A character can engage in a skill challenge to handle the vicious animal and disable it. DC 15 Nature. Complexity 1 (4 successes before 3 failures). Success calms the animal down so it no longer attacks. Failure causes the animal to attack, as above.

- ✦ A character can attack the vicious animal (AC 15, other defenses 11; hp 15). When reduced to 0 hit points, the vicious animal dies, ending the hazard.
- ✦ A character can break or destroy the chain by moving to the iron spike restricting the animal's movement (break DC 30 Strength; AC 5, Fortitude 10; hp 60). Releasing the animal from the chain allows it to move freely. Each round thereafter, the animal can move up to 8 squares to attack the closest creature, as above.

Upgrade to Elite (300 XP)

- ✦ Add a second vicious animal. Both animals attack when one is triggered.

Pyrotechnics Trap **Level 4 Lurker**
Trap XP 175

A fountain of blinding flames erupts from a cunningly concealed nozzle set in the ground.

Trap: Pressure on any of the 6 squares around the nozzle causes the contraption to unleash a fountain of blinding flames into the air, attacking all creatures in a close burst 5.

Perception

- ✦ DC 12: The character notices the nozzle.
- ✦ DC 17: The character notices the pressure plates that activate the trap.

Initiative: +6

Trigger

The trap rolls initiative when a creature enters one of the squares surrounding the square containing the nozzle.

Attack

Standard Action **Close** burst 3
Targets: All creatures in burst
Attack: +7 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d4 + 4 fire damage, and the target is blinded until the end of its next turn.
Miss: Half damage.

Countermeasures

- ✦ A character adjacent to a pressure plate can trigger the trap with a DC 12 Thievery check (standard action). The trap attacks, as above.
- ✦ A character adjacent to a pressure plate can disable the trap with a DC 17 Thievery check (standard action). The trap does not activate when a creature enters a square containing a pressure plate.
- ✦ A character can attack the nozzle (AC 21, other defenses 19; hp 10). Destroying the nozzle disables the trap.

Upgrade to Elite or Solo (see the *Dungeon Master'sGuide*, page 56, for the new XP total)

- ✦ Increase the range to close burst 5.
- ✦ Increase the Perception and Thievery DCs by 2.

Leg Breaker Trap **Level 5 Lurker**
Trap XP 200

Steel jaws clamp shut on the victim's leg, ripping through flesh and rending the bone.

Trap: A concealed animal trap attacks whenever a creature enters its square.

Perception

- ✦ DC 17: The character notices the animal trap.

Trigger

The trap attacks the first creature that enters its space.

Attack

Opportunity Action **Melee**
Target: The creature that triggered the trap
Attack: +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 damage and the target is slowed (save ends both).

Countermeasures

- ✦ A character adjacent to a pressure plate can disable the trap with a DC 17 Thievery check (standard action). The trap does not activate when a creatures enters its square.

Upgrade to Elite (400 XP)

- ✦ Increase the area to 2-by-2 squares.
- ✦ Increase the Perception and Thievery DCs by 2.

Gravity Sphere **Level 7 Obstacle**
Trap XP 300

Sand and dust tumble across the ground toward a pulsing gray sphere.

Trap: The gravity sphere disrupts ranged attacks and pulls creatures that come close to it.

Perception

No check is necessary to notice the gravity sphere.

Additional Skill: Arcana

- ✦ DC 21: The character identifies the object as a gravity sphere.

Initiative +5

Trigger

The trap rolls for initiative at the start of the encounter, and attacks on its turn.

Attack

Standard Action **Close** burst 5
Targets: All creatures in burst
Attack: +10 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target is pulled 4 squares and slowed.
Effect: The burst creates a magical zone, imposing a -2 penalty to ranged attacks made inside the area, until the start of its next turn.

Countermeasures

- ✦ A character can reduce the distance pulled by 1 square with a successful DC 19 Strength check (immediate reaction).
- ✦ A character can attack the sphere (AC 23, other defenses 11; hp 50). Destroying the sphere causes it to explode in a close burst 5: +10 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 5 damage, and push the target 2 squares.

Upgrade to Elite (600 XP)

- ✦ Increase the Strength DC by 2. On a hit, the sphere also knocks the target prone. Worsen the penalty to ranged attacks to -4.

Madness Gas **Level 9 Lurker**
Hazard XP 400

Fumes fill the air.

Trap: Fumes fill the air with a noxious madness-inducing poison.

Perception

- ✦ DC 14: The character notices the air is filled with vapor.
- ✦ DC 19: The character notices the four nozzles spewing the gas into the battlefield.

Additional Skill: Nature

- ✦ DC 19: The character identifies the vapor as madness gas.

Initiative +5

Trigger

The trap rolls for initiative at the start of the encounter, and attacks each creature in the arena each round on its turn.

Attack **Poison**

Standard **Special**
Targets: All creatures in the arena
Attack: +12 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d6 + 5 poison damage, and the target makes a melee basic attack against a random adjacent creature as a free action.

Countermeasures
- ✦ A character can hold his or her breath to avoid the attack, but if the character takes damage, the character must succeed on a DC 19 Endurance check or be unable to hold his or her breath until the start of his or her next turn.
- ✦ A character can disable a nozzle with a DC 19 Thievery check. Once all four nozzles are disabled, the gas clears after its next action.

Fighter-Flinger **Level 10 Lurker**
Trap XP 500

The ground lurches, flinging the hapless victim through the air.

Trap: A spring-loaded platform concealed under the sand explodes with violent force, sending a creature sailing through the air.

Perception
- ✦ DC 21: The character notices the trap.

Trigger
The trap triggers when a creature enters its space.

Attack
Opportunity Action **Melee**
Target: The creature that triggered the trap
Attack: +13 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target flies 2d6 squares in a random direction. It takes 2d8 + 5 damage, and lands prone at the end of its movement.
Miss: The target falls prone in a space adjacent to the trap.

Countermeasures
- ✦ An adjacent character can trigger the trap with a DC 16 Thievery check (standard action).
- ✦ An adjacent character can disable the trap with a DC 21 Thievery check (standard action). The square becomes safe.
- ✦ A character who makes an Athletics check (DC 5, or DC 11 without a running start) can jump over the trap.

Upgrade to Elite (1,000 XP)
- ✦ Increase the Perception and Thievery DCs by 2. When triggered, the trap attacks the triggering creature and all adjacent creatures.

Spinning Column of Death **Level 15 Elite Blaster**
Trap XP 1,200

A 10-foot tall column spins in place as jagged wheels spin, blades lash out, and bludgeons smash the ground.

Trap: A column filling a 2-by-2 area comes to life once activated, attacking all creatures within its reach.

Perception
- ✦ No check is necessary to notice the spinning column of death.

Initiative +5

Trigger
The trap rolls initiative at the start of the encounter. It attacks on its turn.

Attack
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Targets: All creatures in burst
Attack: +20 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 8 damage (crit 1d8 + 24), and push the target 1 square.
Miss: Half damage, and the target is not pushed

Countermeasures
- ✦ A character can attack the trap (AC 29, other defenses 17; hp 100). Destroying the spinning column of death disables the trap.
- ✦ An adjacent character can engage in a skill challenge to disable the trap. DC 23 Thievery. Complexity 1 (4 successes before 3 failures). Success disables the trap. Failure causes the trap to make close burst 2 attack as an immediate reaction.

Bouncing Barrage **Level 20 Elite Blaster**
Trap XP 5,600

Fist-sized balls leap up into the air, unleashing a hail of poisoned darts before landing and bouncing in a random direction.

Trap: Six pressure plates are hidden throughout the battlefield. When a creature steps on the pressure plate, a hidden mechanism fires a small ball into the air. When it reaches its maximum height, it fires a hail of poisoned needles. Upon landing, it bounces, moving in a random direction and firing again each round until neutralized.

Perception
- ✦ DC 22: The character notices the firing mechanism.
- ✦ DC 27: The character notices a pressure plate.

Initiative +9

Trigger
The trap rolls initiative when a creature enters one of the squares containing a pressure plate.

Attack **Poison**
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Targets: All creatures in burst
Attack: +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6 + 8 damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).
Effect: The trap moves 1d6 squares in a random direction.

Countermeasures
- ✦ An adjacent character can trigger the trap with a DC 22 Thievery check (standard action).
- ✦ An adjacent character can disable the trap with a DC 27 Thievery check (standard action). The square containing the pressure plate becomes safe, but the other squares remain active.
- ✦ A character can attack the ball (AC 36, other defenses 32; hp 50). Destroying the ball disables the trap.

THE OPPOSITION

A gladiatorial match can feature just about any creature you like, from natural beasts to undead, from horrific aberrant creatures to deadly demons. Before building the encounter, think about what's appropriate for the venue; the people running the show aren't likely to risk their audience by dropping a beholder in the ring unless they have some safeguards in place first.

Most combats, however, feature other gladiators. These might be named NPCs, maybe with class templates, or just built from scratch. The following gladiators are stock creatures for matches of any level of play. Most of these gladiators are human, but with a little work, you can adjust their statistics to accommodate gladiators of any race.

Grand Melee Gladiator **Level 2 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 31

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +1
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 16; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13
Speed 6

⊕ **Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+7 vs. AC; 3 damage (5 with combat advantage).

Dirty Tactics
A grand melee gladiator gains combat advantage against a target adjacent to one or more creatures.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 9 (+1)
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, light shield, short sword, javelin

Grand Melee Gladiators Tactics

Swarming around their foes, these warriors fight a desperate battle, knowing they are unlikely to see the day's end.

Common Gladiator **Level 3 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 150

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +1
HP 45; Bloodied 22
AC 17; Fortitude 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13
Speed 6

⊕ **Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage, and the gladiator can shift 1 square.

⊕ **Deep Cut** (standard; encounter) ✦ Weapon
+8 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage, ongoing 3 damage (save ends), and the gladiator can shift 1 square.

⊕ **Double Slash** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires two weapons; +8 vs. AC, two attacks; 1d6 + 1 damage per attack. If both attacks hit the same target, the target is also pushed 1 square.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Skills Intimidate +6
Str 17 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Equipment hide armor, 2 short swords

Common Gladiator Tactics

Gladiators master common fighting maneuvers to help draw out the fight.

Veteran Gladiator **Level 6 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 500

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +9
HP 70; Bloodied 35
AC 22; Fortitude 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17
Speed 5

⊕ **Trident** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the veteran gladiator's next turn.

⊕ **Entangling Net** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +11 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 2 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape).

⊕ **Pinning Strike** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target is marked, immobilized, and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends all). The gladiator cannot make trident attacks while the target remains immobilized.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Skills Bluff +8, Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +8
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)
Equipment scale armor, trident, net

Veteran Gladiator Tactics

The veteran gladiator uses weapons to keep enemies pinned down and punishes them for trying to escape, usually by opening with pinning strike and then using entangling net on his or her next turn.

Arena-Trained Ogre **Level 14 Brute**
Large natural humanoid, ogre XP 1,000

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +10
HP 173; Bloodied 86
AC 26; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 24
Speed 8

⊕ **Greataxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 4d6 + 5 damage.

⊕ **Vorpal Sweep** (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Close burst 2; +17 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Intimidate +10
Str 23 (+13) **Dex** 19 (+11) **Wis** 17 (+10)
Con 23 (+13) **Int** 8 (+6) **Cha** 6 (+5)
Equipment hide armor, greataxe

Arena Trained Ogre Tactics

The arena ogre wades into the battle, lopping the heads off those in its way.

Arena Champion **Level 11 Elite Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 1,200

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +11
HP 228; **Bloodied** 114
AC 27; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

⊕ **Scimitar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+16 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage (crit 1d8 + 20).

⊕ **Reaping Blades** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The arena champion makes two scimitar attacks.

⊕ **Treacherous Move** (minor; encounter) **Charm**
+14 vs. Will; the target grants the arena champion combat advantage until the end of the champion's next turn.

⊕ **Finishing Cut** (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Bloodied target only; +16 vs. AC, two attacks; 2d8 + 4 damage (crit 1d8 + 20), and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Combat Advantage
The arena champion's scimitar attacks deal an extra 3d6 damage to targets it has combat advantage against.

Deft Escape (move; at-will)
If the arena champion is marked, end that condition: the arena champion can shift up to 3 squares.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +14, Athletics +16, Bluff +13, Diplomacy +13, Intimidate +13
Str 23 (+11) **Dex** 20 (+10) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 18 (+9) **Int** 15 (+7) **Cha** 17 (+8)
Equipment hide armor, two scimitars

Arena Champion Tactics

The arena champion uses dirty tricks and treachery to win.

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb would like to thanks Dean Poisso for his article "Glory and Triumph" in *Dragon Magazine*, #303. I couldn't have done it without you.

We Who Are About to Die...

D&D Gladiators

by Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by Eric Williams and William O'Connor

"The heat of combat, the roar of the crowds, the stench of your enemies' fear . . . nothing like it. Now get into that arena and fight!"

ONE OF THE MOST thrilling aspects of the Dungeons & Dragons® game is combat. Each character has a broad range of options to best dispatch the enemy. Whether blasting foes with *lightning bolt* or sweeping through them with *giant's wake,* all PCs can contribute a battle's outcome in exciting ways.

In the *D&D* world, finding foes to oppose is rarely a problem. Within places from dungeons to dark forests, foul denizens are plentiful. Although taking the battle to such enemies is what the game is all about, only rarely do you have the opportunity unleash all your capabilities.

You have to carefully husband your resources so you don't come up short at the wrong moment. Managing those resources is part of what makes the game challenging and fun. But, from time to time, it's more fun to just go all out. Going all out is where gladiatorial contests come in.

This article explores the gladiatorial realm through the lens of the *D&D* game. Certain elements here might derive from real-world examples, but all are adapted to fit within the game's high-fantasy needs and mechanical expectations. The character concepts, new feats, new paragon path, new multiclass options, and new gear herein will help you bring the arena to your character and game table.

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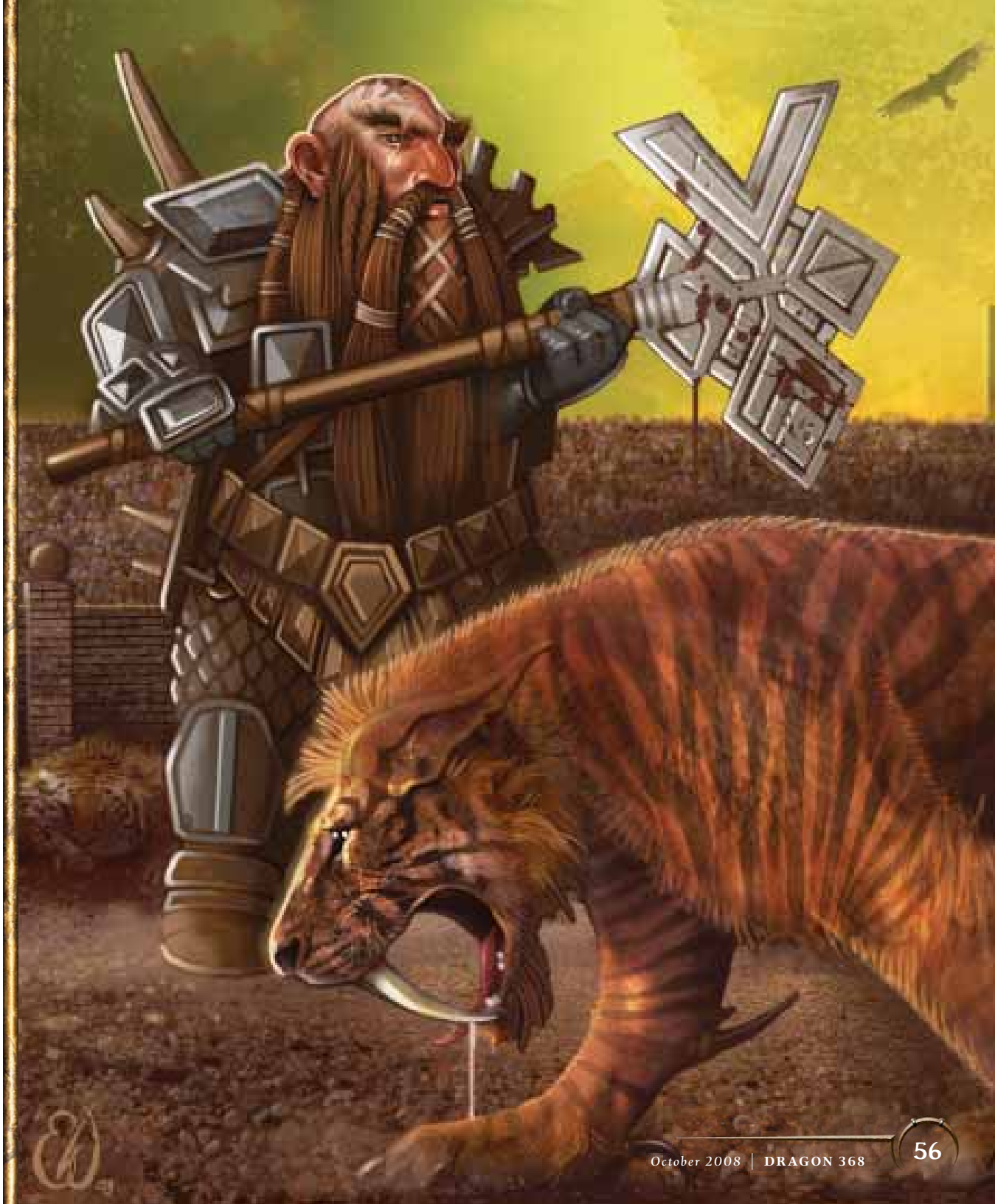


Gladiator Concepts

From the grand coliseums of respectable cities to the claustrophobic death rings of seedy settlements, arenas present opportunities for warriors to test their mettle and hone their talents. Some are cruel affairs, designed to put victims in impossible situations from which they have little hope of escape. Others are centers of sport, where strength and honor are more important than bloodletting. Whatever the environment, the arena draws a variety of combatants to delight and horrify gathered crowds. This section offers a range of motivations and backgrounds to help you visualize your unique gladiatorial champion.

Criminal

"Fighting on the streets got me here. One day, a hard fight in the arena will win me free."

Some cultures consign criminals to the fighting pits as punishment. In the arena, a criminal can fight for freedom and even prove innocence with a trial by combat. Such a fate is rarely heroic, however. Most convicted warriors find their lives cut short in one-sided bouts against professional gladiators, where the criminals wear decorative armor and use dull weapons. Others face hideous monsters or unspeakable traps. Those who survive lose their innocence, if they ever had it, and learn to do what they must to see another day.

Enthusiast

"I thrive on it. Fighting and winning in there let's you know you're alive"

Fool or would-be hero, the enthusiast is drawn to the arena for the love of the sport, as a test of strength or worth, or the desire to achieve something else by surviving a fight in the ring. Enthusiasts can be found among all sorts, from primitive warriors in a right of passage to professional soldiers in nonlethal tournaments. Some fight to settle disputes with rivals. Others engage in the contests for the thrill of legalized killing. Whatever the case might be, such participants are not likely to make a career out of this sort of combat. Numerous warriors who get a taste of the fighting pits find it difficult to sample again.

Indebted

"They say you can't squeeze gold out of empty pockets. I'm proof you can wring out some blood."

Debt is ugly. Owing anyone anything can come back to bite you, even if you come by the debt honestly. An indebted gladiator is one who is making amends, working to pay off obligations, or keeping an extortionist at bay. Some might fight to remove a stain on their reputation or to earn enough coin to free loved ones from captivity. Depending on the circumstances, the gladiator might be reckless, having little left to live for, or careful, with everything to lose. Indebtedness rarely lasts forever, though, unless you make another unwise bargain or you owe a dishonest someone who just doesn't want to lose good gladiator.

Professional

"It pays well, and it lets me give the bad guys a little taste of justice."

Professional gladiators fight as a means of income, sometimes as part entertainer and part executioner. Practiced veterans of numerous engagements, these warriors know their way around an arena. They know just what maneuvers to use, what weapons to employ, and how to gain the crowd's approval. The more the audience likes a gladiator, the better the pay, so the professional works to give the masses a good show. A good strategy is dragging out the fight a little longer than necessary, toying with a foe to heighten the tension. Ending the fight in a brutal display of violence is another, giving the people exactly the carnage they came to see.

Revenge

"Blood is bound to flow this day. I warrant it will be yours!"

A rare few gladiators enter the arena to right a wrong. As unusual as it sounds, sometimes getting down and dirty in the fighting pits is just what's needed to get back at the people who have crossed you. To such a gladiator, fighting in an arena is a means to an end. The target of hatred might be another pit fighter, someone who works the games, a patron who keeps a stable of gladiators, or a raving fan of the sport. A gladiator driven by vengeance might resolve a dispute after a single bloody match. Another might ravage the enemy financially or emotionally first, perhaps defeating the target's personal champions one by one. Such a careful plotter only faces the real foe once everything else has been taken.

Slave

"I fight for freedom. I won't stop until all our chains are broken."

Only a corrupt and decadent society makes a sport of pitting slaves against the odds of the arena. Savage races—orcs, goblins, and troglodytes for example—regularly have such spectacles. A slave gladiator who does well can bring fame and fortune to his or her master. As the master's lot improves so might the slave's. Most slave gladiators are unwilling combatants, but a few actually take pleasure in the fight, exulting in the rewards of their successes. Those who enjoy this sort of grisly work are likely to become professional gladiators when given a chance at freedom. For the rest, each bout is a dance with death. Such warriors split their time between contests honing their talents and searching for a way to escape. Those who fail eventually meet a bloody end, while those who succeed might just get that chance at freedom, vengeance, or both.

Gladiator Options

Any character who has the courage can go into the arena and test his or her mettle, but it takes a training and experience to make a real gladiator. The following feats are for characters pursuing a gladiatorial fighting style.

Heroic Tier Feats

Any feat in the following section is available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

Bloodthirsty Mien

Prerequisite: Cha 15 or trained in Intimidate
Benefit: Whenever you score a critical hit, you gain a +5 bonus to Intimidate checks until the end of the encounter.

Deft Footwork

Prerequisite: Dex 13, any martial class
Benefit: Whenever an opponent provokes an opportunity attack from you, you can shift 1 square as an opportunity action instead of making a melee basic attack.

Divine Rage [Divinity]

Prerequisite: Channel Divinity class feature
Benefit: You can invoke the power of your deity to use *divine rage*.

Channel Divinity: Divine Rage **Feat Power**

You welcome the wrath of the divine into your body, becoming a vessel of spiritual power.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Implement
Minor Action **Close** burst 1
Target: Each enemy in burst.
Attack: Wisdom vs. Will
Hit: You push the target 1 square, and the target takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.
Miss: You push the target 1 square.
Special: You must take the Divine Rage feat to use this power.

Double Team [Warlord]

Prerequisite: Warlord
Benefit: When making a melee attack, you can take a –2 penalty to the attack roll. If the attack hits, another ally adjacent to the target gains a +3 bonus to damage rolls against the target until the end of your next turn.

Fearless Mind

Prerequisite: Wis 15, any martial class
Benefit: You gain a +2 feat bonus to saving throws against charm and fear effects, and a +1 feat bonus to your Will defense against charm and fear effects.

Feign Injury

Prerequisite: Trained in Bluff
Benefit: Whenever you make a successful Bluff check in combat to gain combat advantage while you are bloodied, you can also slide the target 1 square.

Grim Promise

Prerequisite: Trained in Intimidate
Benefit: Whenever you score a critical hit against an enemy, that enemy takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Pin Down [Fighter]

Prerequisite: Str 17, fighter
Benefit: A prone target you are grabbing can't stand until you end the grab or until it escapes.

Shield Fighting

Prerequisite: Dex 15, proficient with a shield
Benefit: Until the start of your next turn, you can forgo the shield bonus to AC and Reflex granted by a shield you wield. If you do, you gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls.

Sickening Finish

Prerequisite: Trained in Intimidate
Benefit: Whenever you drop an enemy to 0 hp, you gain a +1 feat bonus to all your defenses until the end of your next turn.

Staff Fighting

Prerequisite: Wis 13, proficient with a quarterstaff
Benefit: You can treat the quarterstaff as a double weapon. As a double weapon, the staff deals 1d8/1d8 damage and gains the defensive and off-hand properties. For more on double weapons, see *Adventurer's Vault* 10.

Underhanded Tactics [Rogue]

Prerequisite: Rogue, Sneak Attack class feature
Benefit: Whenever you deal Sneak Attack damage, you can forgo rolling 1 die of that damage to impose a –2 penalty to the target's attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Paragon Tier Feats

Any feat in the following section is available to a character of 11th level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Brutal Finish

Prerequisite: Cha 17 or trained in Intimidate
Benefit: Whenever you reduce an enemy to 0 hit points by using an encounter or daily attack power, each adjacent enemy takes a –2 penalty to its Will defense until the end of your next turn.

Called Shot

Prerequisite: Prime Shot class feature
Benefit: Whenever you successfully hit a target against whom you received your Prime Shot bonus, your attack deals an additional 5 damage.

Serpent Strike Fighting

Prerequisite: Str 17, Dex 17, Two-Weapon Fighting
Benefit: While you hold a spear in one hand and a flail in the other, targets hit by your opportunity attacks take a –2 penalty to AC until the end of your next turn.

Two-Weapon Ambush

Prerequisite: Dex 17, Two-Weapon Fighting
Benefit: While you wield two weapons and attack foes that grant you combat advantage, your primary weapon gains the brutal 1 property (see *Adventurer's Vault* 8).

Epic Tier Feats

Any feat in the following section is available to a character of 21st level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Crushing Grab [Fighter]

Prerequisite: Str 19, fighter
Benefit: Each round you sustain a grab on your turn, the target of the grab takes damage equal to 5 + your Strength modifier.

Tactical Action [Warlord]

Prerequisite: Int 19, Tactical Presence class feature
Benefit: Whenever an ally you can see spends an action point to make an extra attack and misses on that attack, that ally can make a basic attack against the same target as a free action.

Arena Fighting Feats

Competitive fighting in the arena breeds a wide range of fighting styles, combat techniques suited for contests scrutinized by countless bloodthirsty spectators. Arena fighting feats help individualize the different forms and tactics gladiators use. Each feat is open to martial characters and provides modifications to at-will exploits. The exploits are associated with the page on which they appear in the *Player's Handbook* or *Martial Power* (*MP*).

Arena Specialist [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Int 13, any martial class
Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Circling Strike (ranger, MP 43): Before and after the attack with this exploit, your beast companion can shift 1 square.

Disheartening Strike (rogue, MP 73): If you hit with this exploit and are trained in Intimidate, one enemy adjacent to your target takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Opening Shove (warlord, MP 103): If the ally shifts and ends its movement in a space adjacent to you or your target, that ally gains a +1 power bonus to AC until the end of your next turn.

Reaping Strike (fighter, PH 77): If you miss with this exploit, you can deal damage to the target or one enemy adjacent to the target.

Arkhosian High Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Cha 13 or dragonborn race, any martial class
Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Commander's Strike (warlord, PH 145): If the ally hits, you can shift 1 square.

Piercing Strike (rogue, PH 118): If you score a critical hit with this exploit, the target takes a –2 penalty to AC until the end of your next turn.

Reaping Strike (fighter, PH 77): If you are a dragonborn, in lieu of dealing damage on a miss, you can instead use your *dragon breath* racial power, if available, as a free action.

Battle-Scarred Veteran [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Con 13, any martial class
Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Crushing Surge (fighter, MP 7): If you have no temporary hit points when you use this exploit, you gain a +1 bonus to the attack roll.

Deft Strike (rogue, PH 118): If you take damage from an opportunity attack provoked by the movement this exploit grants, reduce that damage by your Constitution modifier.

Nimble Strike (ranger, PH 105): If you shift before the attack and you hit, you can also shift 1 square after the attack.

Viper's Strike (warlord, PH 145): If the target provokes an opportunity attack from your ally and that attack hits, it deals extra damage equal to your Constitution modifier.

Binding Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Dex 13, Two-Weapon Fighting, any martial class
Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Dual Strike (fighter, MP 7): While you wield a spear and a flail, if both attacks hit, you can immobilize the target until the end of your next turn instead of dealing damage to it.

Twin Strike (Ranger, PH 105): While you wield a spear and a flail, if you hit one creature with both attacks, you can slide that target 1 square.

Catspaw Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Cha 13, any martial class
Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Footwork Lure (fighter, MP 7): If you hit with this exploit, you can forgo shifting and instead slide the target 1 square to any space adjacent to you.

Predator Strike (ranger, MP 43): If your beast companion has combat advantage against the target, and you hit with this exploit, you knock the target prone.

Sly Flourish (rogue, PH 118): If you score a critical hit with this exploit, the next ally that hits the target before the end of your next turn deals extra damage equal to your Charisma modifier.

Wolf Pack Tactics (warlord, PH 145): If you score a critical hit with this exploit, an ally adjacent to you or the target can shift 1 square.

Daring Performer [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Cha 13, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Brash Assault (warlord, MP 103): Whenever the enemy's granted attack is a critical hit, your ally's successful granted basic attack is also a critical hit.

Deft Strike (rogue, PH 118): You can choose not to move 2 squares before the attack to instead make a Bluff check to gain combat advantage against the target as a free action. You can still use Bluff in this way only once per encounter.

Deft Hurler Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Dex 13 or halfling race, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Cleave (fighter, PH 77): You can forgo dealing damage to the adjacent enemy to instead make a ranged basic attack with a heavy thrown weapon. This ranged basic attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Sly Flourish (rogue, PH 118): If you are a halfling and use *second chance* to change an attack from a hit to a miss, you can use this exploit to make a ranged attack as a free action.

Twin Strike (ranger, PH 105): If you are wielding two light thrown weapons and both attacks miss, you can shift 1 square after the attack.

Exotic Fighting Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Any martial class, proficiency with a superior weapon

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Brash Assault (warlord, MP 103): If you are wielding a superior weapon and you hit with this exploit, the target does not have combat advantage against you if it makes the granted basic attack.

Disheartening Strike (rogue, MP 73): If you are wielding a superior weapon and hit with this exploit, you can push the target 1 square.

Sure Strike (fighter, PH 77): If you are wielding a superior weapon and hit with this exploit, you can add the weapon's proficiency bonus to the damage roll.

Twin Strike (ranger, PH 105): If you are wielding a double weapon, you can shift 1 square after the first attack.

Expert Charioteer [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Dex 13, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Careful Attack (ranger, PH 105): If you are in a moving vehicle and you hit with this exploit, you gain cover against the next attack that targets you until the end of your next turn.

Commander's Strike (warlord, PH 145): If you are in a moving vehicle, the ally can shift 1 square after the granted attack as a free action.

Reaping Strike (fighter, PH 77): If you are in a moving vehicle and you hit with this exploit, you gain a bonus to the damage roll equal to your Dexterity modifier.

Fluttering Leaf Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Wis 13 or elf race, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Deft Strike (rogue, PH 118): You can move 3 squares before the attack instead of 2.

Footwork Lure (fighter, MP 7): You can shift 2 squares instead of 1, but you must end the shift adjacent to the target.

Hit and Run (ranger, PH 105): If you move after the attack, you can move up to your speed + 2.

Nimble Strike (ranger, PH 105): If you are an elf and you miss with this attack, and you use your *elven accuracy* racial power to reroll, you can add a +2 bonus to the reroll.

Viper's Strike (warlord, PH 145): If the target shifts before the end of your next turn, you can also shift 1 square to a space adjacent to the target.

Grudge Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Wis 13 or dwarf race, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Careful Attack (ranger, PH 105): If the target dealt you damage since the end of your last turn, you deal extra damage with this exploit equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Furious Smash (warlord, PH 145): If the target dealt you damage since the end of your last turn, *you gain a +2 bonus to the attack roll with this exploit.*

Riposte Strike (rogue, PH 118): If you hit with the immediate interrupt attack this exploit grants, the target takes a –2 penalty to AC and Reflex defense until the end of your next turn.

Sure Strike (fighter, PH 77): If the target dealt you damage since the end of your last turn, you deal extra damage with this exploit equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Hunting Spider Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Dex 13 or drow race, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Dual Strike (fighter, MP 7): Against a target that cannot see you, you can reroll one attack roll for this exploit, but you must use the second result.

Predator Strike (ranger, MP 43): If you and your beast companion are flanking the target, you can shift 1 square after the attack.

Viper's Strike (warlord, PH 145): If the target shifts before the end of your next turn and your ally hits, the target also grants combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

Menacing Brute Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Con 13 or Cha 13, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Brash Assault (warlord, MP 103): If the target makes a melee basic attack against you, it grants combat advantage to one of your allies within 5 squares of you until the end of your next turn.

Brash Strike (fighter, MP 7): If you hit with this exploit, the target also takes a –1 penalty to Will defense until the end of your next turn.

Circling Strike (ranger, MP 43): If you hit with this exploit and the target moves or shifts before the end of your next turn, your beast companion can shift 1 square as a free action.

Mocking Knave Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Cha 13, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Opening Shove (warlord, MP 103): If your ally scores a critical hit against the target with the granted melee basic attack, that ally can also push the target 1 square.

Sly Flourish (rogue, PH 118): If you score a critical hit with this exploit, the target also takes penalty to attack rolls equal to one-half your Charisma modifier (minimum 1) until the end of your next turn.

Tide of Iron (fighter, PH 77): If you hit with this exploit, you can forgo pushing the target to instead pull one ally you can see 1 square and shift 1 square.

Nerathi Vanguard Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Con 13 or human race, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Commander's Strike (warlord, PH 145): If you are wielding a shield when you use this exploit, one ally adjacent to you gains a +1 shield bonus to AC until the end of your next turn.

Riposte Strike (rogue, PH 118): If the enemy attacks you before the start of your next turn, you can gain a +3 bonus to AC against that attack instead of taking the immediate interrupt attack this exploit grants.

Sure Strike (fighter, PH 77): If you are wielding a shield and you hit with this exploit, you gain a +1 feat bonus to AC until the end of your next turn.

Twin Strike (ranger, PH 105): If you're wielding two melee weapons and both attacks miss, you gain a +2 shield bonus to AC against the target or targets of your attacks until the end of your next turn.

Spear and Shield Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Int 13, any martial class, proficiency with a shield

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

*Opening Shove (warlord, MP 103): While armed with a spear and a shield, y*ou can shift into the space the target vacated after your attack.

Tide of Iron (fighter, PH 77): While armed with a spear and a shield, your reach extends by 1 square for using this exploit.

Spirited Rider [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Wis 13, Mounted Combat, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Cleave (fighter, PH 77): If you charge while mounted, you can use *cleave* in place of a melee basic attack.

Commander's Strike (warlord, PH 145): If you are mounted, your mount can make the melee basic attack this power grants. If that attack hits, the target is pushed 1 square.

Starlight Duelist Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Dex 13 or eladrin race, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Dual Strike (fighter, MP 7): If both attacks hit, you can shift 1 square to a square adjacent to the target.

Hit and Run (ranger, PH 105): If you are an eladrin, you can use your *fey step* racial power, if it is available, as a free action after this attack.

Riposte Strike (rogue, PH 118): If you are an eladrin, rather than make an attack as an immediate interrupt, you can use your *fey step* racial power, if it is available, as an immediate reaction.

Swift Blade Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Dex 13, Two-Weapon Fighting, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Dual Strike (fighter, MP 7): If both attacks hit and you are wielding a light blade in each hand, you gain a +2 feat bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls with opportunity attacks until the start of your next turn.

Twin Strike (ranger, PH 105): If both attacks hit and you are wielding a light blade in each hand, you deal extra damage equal to your Dexterity modifier to one of your targets.

Trickster's Blade Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Cha 13, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Deft Strike (rogue, PH 118): If you score a critical hit with this exploit, you can shift 1 square after the attack.

Footwork Lure (fighter, MP 7): You can shift 1 square before the attack.

Nimble Strike (ranger, PH 105): If you shift after the attack, one ally adjacent to you can shift 1 square as a free action. The ally's shift must end in a square adjacent to the target.

Viper's Strike (warlord, PH 145): If you have combat advantage against the target and hit with this exploit, one ally adjacent to you can shift 1 square.

True Arrow Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Dex 13, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Careful Attack (ranger, PH 105): If you are wielding a ranged weapon and this attack misses, you can grant combat advantage to all enemies until the start of your next turn to make a ranged basic attack against the same target as a free action.

Sly Flourish (rogue, PH 118): With this exploit, you take no penalty to your attack roll for attacking targets at long range.

Turathi Assault Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Int 13 or tiefling race, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Crushing Surge (fighter, MP 7): If you hit with this exploit, you gain a +1 feat bonus to Fortitude until the start of your next turn.

Furious Smash (warlord, PH 145): If you score a critical hit with this exploit, the target takes extra damage equal to your Constitution modifier and grants combat advantage to the next one of your allies to attack it.

Twin Strike (ranger, PH 105): If your first attack with this exploit hits, you gain a +1 feat bonus to the second attack's attack roll.

Untamed Berserker Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Con 13, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Brash Assault (warlord, MP 103): If your ally hits the target with the granted basic attack, you gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier.

Cleave (fighter, PH 77): You can forgo dealing damage to an adjacent enemy to instead gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier.

Disheartening Attack (rogue, MP 73): If you hit with this exploit, you can add your Strength modifier as a feat bonus to Intimidate checks until the end of the encounter.

Predator Strike (ranger, MP 43): Your beast companion can shift 1 square before the attack.

Warborn Fury Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Con 13 or warforged race, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Commander's Strike (warlord, PH 145): If your ally hits with the granted melee basic attack, one ally adjacent to the target can shift 1 square.

Nimble Strike (ranger, PH 105): If you forgo shifting before or after the attack, then if the target moves or shifts before the end of your next turn, you can shift 1 square as a free action.

Reaping Strike (fighter, PH 77): If you're wielding a two-handed weapon and you miss with this exploit, you deal damage equal to your Strength modifier +2.

Riposte Strike (rogue, PH 118): If you hit with the granted immediate interrupt attack, the target takes a –3 penalty to its attack roll with the triggering attack.

Warding Shield Style [Arena Fighting]

Prerequisites: Int 13, any martial class, proficient with a shield

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Opening Shove (warlord, MP 103): If you are wielding a shield, you can add your shield bonus as a feat bonus to your attack roll.

Tide of Iron (fighter, PH 77): If you hit with this exploit, an ally adjacent to the target gains a +1 shield bonus to AC until the end of your next turn or until the target leaves its square—whichever comes first.

Arena Champion

One hundred battles have I fought, and each time I have emerged victorious. The crowds shall drown you with their cries. Thirsty sands shall drink your blood. Make peace with your gods, for I intend to speed you to them.

Prerequisites: Trained in Intimidate, at least one Arena Fighting feat, any martial class

Forged in battle, tempered in cheers, and quenched in the blood of countless foes, you are an arena champion. Your lot is to fight for the favor of the crowds, to entertain them with the violence you know all too well. You have faced vicious beasts and battled scores of savage brutes plucked from the untamed frontiers. It makes no difference to you. Your job is to dispatch each one with flair and skill, to please onlookers with your showmanship. You are their champion, and you aim to make sure your name lives on in the hearts and minds of those who adore you.

Arena Champion Path Features

Awing Action (11th level): When you spend an action point, each enemy you hit this turn takes a –2 penalty to defenses until the end of your next turn.

Study Foe (11th level): Whenever you take the total defense action, you gain a bonus to your next attack roll equal to half your Charisma modifier or half your Wisdom modifier until the end of your next turn.

Seize Opening (16th level): Whenever you successfully use Bluff to gain combat advantage in combat, you can make a basic attack against that target as a free action.

Arena Champion Powers

Taxing Strike Arena Champion Attack 11

You know where to strike a foe to rob it of its strength.

Encounter ✦ Weapon
Standard Action Melee or Ranged weapon
Effect: Make a basic attack with your weapon. On a hit, the target is also weakened until the end of your next turn.

Hidden Reserves Arena Champion Utility 12

Faced with defeat, you draw upon your implacable endurance for one last chance at victory.

Daily ✦ Healing
No Action Personal
Trigger: You are reduced to 0 or fewer hit points
Effect: Spend a healing surge.

Bloodletting Strike Arena Champion Attack 20

Your savaging unleashes a fountain of blood, putting your adversary on the defensive.

Daily ✦ Reliable, Weapon
Standard Action Melee or Ranged weapon
Effect: Make a basic attack with your weapon. On a hit, the attack deals an additional 2[W] damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 damage and a –2 penalty to all defenses against you (save ends both).

Gladiators' Arsenal

Equipment is everything to a warrior. Good weapons and armor ensure you survive to fight another day. The following items can be useful to any gladiator.

Armor

Protection is the name of the gladiatorial game. But a gladiator has to use armor that is stylish, revealing, and more effective than it might look. Such armor is the only way to keep up appearances while hedging against wounds.

Battle Harness — Level 4+

Attack first, have your weapons ready, keep your vitals safe—this armor does it all.

Lvl 4	+1	840 gp	Lvl 19	+4	105,000 gp
Lvl 9	+2	4,200 gp	Lvl 24	+5	525,000 gp
Lvl 14	+3	21,000 gp	Lvl 29	+6	2,625,000 gp

Armor: Cloth, Leather, Hide
Enhancement: AC
Property: As a free action, you can draw a sheathed weapon or retrieve a stowed item.
Property: You gain a power bonus to initiative equal to the item's enhancement bonus.

Piecemeal Armor — Level 5+

This armor, assembled from pieces of chain or scale, falsely seems to emphasize style over protection.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Armor: Chain, Scale
Enhancement: AC
Power (Encounter): Immediate Interrupt. You can use this power when an enemy hits you. You gain a +2 power bonus to AC against the triggering attack.

Savage Armor — Level 2+

Grotesque faces contort on this armor's surface, howling with glee as the battle rages.

Lvl 2	+1	520 gp	Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp
Lvl 7	+2	2,600 gp	Lvl 22	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	Lvl 27	+6	1,625,000 gp

Armor: Scale, Plate
Enhancement: AC
Property: You gain an item bonus to Intimidate checks equal to the armor's enhancement bonus.
Power (Daily): Minor Action. You shriek and your armor howls with you, pushing all adjacent enemies 1 square.

Stanching Armor — Level 3+

This form-fitting armor clings to you as if it were a second skin, sealing your wounds.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Armor: Cloth, Leather
Enhancement: AC
Property: You gain an item bonus to saving throws against ongoing untyped damage equal to the armor's enhancement bonus.
Power (Daily ✦ Healing): Minor Action. You spend a healing surge and regain hit points equal to your surge value + the armor's enhancement bonus.

Vitality Armor — Level 7+

When you take a serious wound while wearing this armor, it feeds you back a bit of your lost vigor.

Lvl 7	+2	2,600 gp	Lvl 22	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	Lvl 27	+6	1,625,000 gp
Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp			

Armor: Scale, Plate
Enhancement: AC
Property: When an enemy scores a critical hit against you, you gain temporary hit points equal to 5 + the armor's enhancement bonus at the start of your next turn.

Weapons

Fighting in the arena is more than simply butchering your opponent. To have success, at least in the eyes of the audience, a gladiator must draw out the fight to make the entertainment last, employ weapons capable of producing spectacular results, and end the bout before interest wanes. Since battle is the means through which contests are solved, your choice of arms is integral to victory.

Bola: Consisting of a set of two or three weighted spheres connected by cord, a bola tangles up opponents, but its spheres are also strong enough to inflict injuries.

Melee Weapons

Superior Melee Weapons

One-Handed

Weapon	Prof	Damage	Range	Price	Weight	Group	Properties
Net	+2	1d6	2/5	20 gp	6 lb.	Flail	Off-hand, heavy thrown
Whip	+3	1d4	—	1 gp	2 lb.	Flail	Off-hand, reach

Ranged Weapons

Superior Ranged Weapons

One-Handed

Weapon	Prof	Damage	Range	Price	Weight	Group	Properties
Bola	+3	1d4	4/8	5 gp	2 lb.	Flail	Light thrown

Net: This net consists of a web of rope or cord fitted with heavy weights. A trailing cord enables the wielder to control entangled opponents.

Whip: Although an impractical weapon in most hands, a well-placed whip strike can put one's opponent at a serious disadvantage.

Magic Weapons

Flensing Weapon — Level 5+

Nasty serrations extend from this weapon, perfect for tearing flesh.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Weapon: Axe, Light Blade, Heavy Blade, Spear
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 damage per plus, or +1d8 damage per plus against bloodied targets
Power (Daily): Free Action. Use this power when you hit with the weapon. The target takes ongoing 5 damage and is considered bloodied even if it has more hit points than its bloodied value (save ends both).

Level 15 or 20: Ongoing 10 damage.
Level 25 or 30: Ongoing 15 damage.

Savage Weapon — Level 13+

Cruelly shaped, this weapon fuels your courage and your alacrity.

Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Weapon: Flail, Hammer, Mace
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 damage per plus
Property: You gain an item bonus to saving throws against fear effects equal to the weapon's enhancement bonus.
Power (Daily): Free Action. Use this power when you successfully hit with this weapon. You can shift 1 square and make a melee basic attack with this weapon.

Singing Weapon — Level 9+

As you go about your bloody work, this elegant blade sings your praises.

Lvl 9	+2	4,200 gp	Lvl 24	+5	525,000 gp
Lvl 14	+3	21,000 gp	Lvl 29	+6	2,625,000 gp
Lvl 19	+4	105,000 gp			

Weapon: Heavy Blade, Light Blade
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 thunder damage per plus, and the target is deafened until the end of your next turn
Property: You gain an item bonus to Diplomacy checks equal to the weapon's enhancement bonus.
Power (Daily ✦ Thunder): Free Action. Use this power when you hit with the weapon. Deal an extra 1d6 thunder damage, and the target is dazed until the end of your next turn.

Victory Flash Weapon — Level 8+

You strike your enemy down with dazzling flare, and this weapon responds in kind.

Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp
Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp			

Weapon: Any melee
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 damage per plus
Power (Daily): Free Action. Use this power when you reduce an enemy to 0 hit points with this weapon. Make a secondary attack. *Secondary Attack:* close burst 1; targets enemies; Strength vs. Will; the target is blinded until the end of your next turn.

Weapon Mastery Feats

An arena match is a spectacle, so numerous gladiators employ unusual weapons to impress spectators. A whip's loud crack grabs the audience members and holds their attention, and tension builds when a net or bola entangles an enemy. Some warriors devote extra time and training to learning exotic maneuvers and tactics with these unusual weapons.

To gain such specialized proficiency in one of these weapons, you must select the relevant weapon mastery feat (see below). The feat grants not only proficiency, but also a special benefit. Moreover, it grants access to power-swap feats that provide those aforementioned exotic maneuvers and tactics. These exploits allow you to add more control to your array of martial attacks.

Since the weapon mastery training feats require a great deal of focused training, each one is a multiclass feat. Normal rules for selecting multiclass feats apply.

Bola Training [Multiclass]

Prerequisites: Dex 13, any martial class

Benefit: You gain proficiency with the bola. When you hit a target with your bola, you can forgo dealing damage to immobilize the target until the end of your next turn. On a critical hit, the target is also knocked prone.

Bola Novice

Prerequisites: Bola Training, 4th level

Benefit: You can swap one 3rd-level or higher encounter attack power you know for the *binding bola* attack power.

Binding Bola — **Feat Power**

The weights entwine the cords around your target, wrapping it so tightly so that it cannot maintain its momentum.

Encounter ✦ Weapon
Standard Action **Ranged** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a bola.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of your next turn. On a critical hit, the target is also knocked prone.

At 11th level, increase to 3[W] damage.
At 21st level, increase to 4[W] damage.

Bola Expert

Prerequisites: Bola Training, 8th level

Benefit: You can swap one 6th-level or higher utility power you know for the *bola recovery* utility power.

Bola Recovery — **Feat Power**

With the bola back in hand, you ready it for another precise throw.

Encounter
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Regain the use of the *binding bola* power.

Bola Specialist

Prerequisites: Bola Training, 10th level

Benefit: You can swap one 9th-level or higher daily attack power you know for the *felling bola* attack power.

Felling Bola — **Feat Power**

Such is the force of your throw that you tangle up the enemy and knock it from its feet.

Daily ✦ Weapon
Standard Action **Ranged** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a bola.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier + Strength modifier damage, and the target is knocked prone and cannot stand (save ends).

At 15th level, increase to 3[W] damage.
At 25th level, increase to 5[W] damage.
Miss: Half damage, and the target is knocked prone and cannot stand until the end of your next turn.

Net Training [Multiclass]

Prerequisites: Str 13, any martial class

Benefit: You gain proficiency with the net. When you hit a target with your net, the target is slowed until the end of your next turn.

Net Novice

Prerequisites: Net Training, 4th level

Benefit: You can swap one 3rd-level or higher encounter attack power you know for the *net sweep* attack power.

Net Sweep — **Feat Power**

You sweep your net around, smashing your foes and battering down their weapons.

Encounter ✦ Weapon
Standard Action **Close** burst 1
Requirement: You must be wielding a net.
Targets: Each creature in burst
Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target is slowed and takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

At 11th level, increase to 2[W] damage.
At 21st level, increase to 3[W] damage.

Net Expert

Prerequisites: Net Training, 8th level

Benefit: You can swap one 6th-level or higher utility power you know for the *net shield* utility power.

Net Shield — **Feat Power**

You spin the net in front of you to foil your enemies' attacks.

Encounter ✦ Weapon
Minor Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be wielding a net.
Effect: Until the start of your next turn, you gain a +2 power bonus to AC and Reflex defense.

Net Specialist

Prerequisites: Net Training, 10th level

Benefit: You can swap one 9th-level or higher daily attack power you know for the *net trap* attack power.

Net Trap — Feat Power

You fling the net so that it falls over your enemy. The more the foe struggles, the tighter the net's grasp becomes.

Daily ✦ Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** 5
Requirement: You must be wielding a net.
Special: This attack has a reach of 5 regardless of the weapon's actual reach.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. Reflex
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape). While the target is grabbed, it takes a -5 penalty to attack rolls and rolls made to escape the grab. While grabbing the target, you cannot make attacks with your net. You can sustain the grab as long as the target is within 5 squares of you.

At 15th level, increase to 2[W] damage.
At 25th level, increase to 3[W] damage.

Aftereffect: The target is slowed until the end of your next turn.
Miss: Half damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of your next turn, but it is not grabbed.

Whip Training [Multiclass]

Prerequisites: Dex 13, any martial class

Benefit: You gain proficiency with the whip. When you hit a target with your whip, that target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against a target of your choice until the end of your next turn.

Whip Novice

Prerequisites: Whip Training, 4th level

Benefit: You can swap one 3rd-level or higher encounter attack power you know for the *whip snare* attack power.

Whip Snare — Feat Power

With a deft flick of the wrist, you coil your whip around your foe's limb, giving you some control of where that enemy goes—down or toward you.

Encounter ✦ Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a whip.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and you can knock the target prone or pull the target 1 square.

At 11th level, increase to 3[W] damage.
At 21st level, increase to 4[W] damage.

Whip Expert

Prerequisites: Whip Training, 8th level

Benefit: You can swap one 6th-level or higher utility power you know for the *whip crack* utility power.

Whip Crack — Feat Power

You snap your whip, warning your enemy not to move carelessly.

Encounter ✦ Weapon
Minor Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be wielding a whip.
Effect: Until the start of your next turn, when an enemy within your reach takes an action that provokes opportunity attacks from adjacent enemies, it provokes an opportunity attack from you.

Whip Specialist

Prerequisites: Whip Training, 10th level

Benefit: You can swap one 9th-level or higher daily attack power you know for the *entangling whip* attack power.

Entangling Whip — Feat Power

Your whip is like an extension of you, coiling around your enemy so you can drag that foe wherever you like.

Daily ✦ Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a whip.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, the target is grabbed (until escape) and knocked prone. The target takes a -5 penalty to escape the grab, and while you have the target grabbed you can pull it 1 square as a minor action. While grabbing the target, you cannot make attacks with the whip. You can sustain the grab as long as the target is within 2 squares of you.

At 15th level, increase to 3[W] damage.
At 25th level, increase to 4[W] damage.

Miss: The target is grabbed (until escape) and knocked prone. While you have the target grabbed you can pull it 1 square as a minor action. While grabbing the target, you cannot make attacks with the whip. You can sustain the grab as long as the target is within 2 squares of you.

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb either wanders what used to be called the Prime Material Plane as a man, wearing no armor but using the black sword as a weapon, or as a golden amoeba with a man's brain in place of a nucleus. In either case he attacks as a monster. Robert lives in Tennessee with his wife Stacee and pride of fiendish gelatinous house cats.

Robert would like to thank Dean Poisso for his article "Glory and Triumph" in *Dragon® Magazine*, #303. I couldn't have done it without you.

Heroic Feats

Bloodthirsty Mien	Cha 15 or trained in Intimidate	+5 to Intimidate for the encounter on a crit
Deft Footwork	Dex 13, any martial class	Shift 1 instead of opportunity attack
Divine Rage	Channel Divinity class feature	Use Channel Divinity to invoke *divine rage*
Double Team	Warlord	-2 attack, grant ally +3 damage
Fearless Mind	Wis 15, any martial class	+2 to saving throws and +1 Will vs. charm and fear
Feign Injury	Trained in Bluff	Pull target 1 with successful Bluff to gain combat advantage
Grim Promise	Trained in Intimidate	Enemy you crit takes -2 to attack rolls
Pin Down	Str 17, fighter	Prone, grabbed targets can't stand until escape
Shield Fighting	Dex 15, proficient with a shield	Forgo shield bonus to gain +2 damage with light blade
Sickening Finish	Trained in Intimidate	Drop foe to gain +1 to defenses
Staff Fighting	Wis 13, proficient with a quarterstaff	Treat quarterstaff as double weapon
Underhanded Tactics	Rogue, Sneak Attack class feature	Foe takes -2 to attack instead of 1 die of sneak attack damage

Paragon Feats

Brutal Finish	Cha 17 or trained in Intimidate	Drop foe to grant adjacent enemies -2 Will
Called Shot	Prime Shot class feature	+5 damage against Prime Shot targets
Serpent Strike Fighting	Str 17, Dex 17, Two-Weapon Fighting	Armed with spear and flail, opportunity attacks grant -2 AC
Two-Weapon Ambush	Dex 17, Two-Weapon Fighting	Wielding two weapons against foe granting combat advantage, primary weapon gains the brutal 1 property

Epic Feats

Crushing Grab	Str 19, fighter	Sustain grab to damage target
Tactical Action	Int 19, Tactical Presence class feature	Ally spends action point to attack and misses, makes basic attack as free action

Arena Fighting Feats

Arena Veteran	Int 13, any martial class	Augment at-will exploits
Arkhosian High Style	Cha 13 or dragonborn race, any martial class	Augment at-will exploits
Battle-Scarred Veteran	Con 13, any martial class	Augment at-will exploits
Binding Style	Dex 13, Two-Weapon Fighting, any martial class	Augment at-will exploits
Catspaw Style	Cha 13, any martial class	Augment at-will exploits
Daring Performer	Cha 13, any martial class	Augment at-will exploits
Deft Hurler Style	Dex 13 or halfling race, any martial class	Augment at-will exploits
Exotic Fighting Style	Any martial class, proficiency with a superior weapon	Augment at-will exploits
Expert Charioteer	Dex 13, any martial class	Augment at-will exploits
Fluttering Leaf Style	Wis 13 or elf race, any martial class	Augment at-will exploits
Grudge Style	Wis 13 or dwarf race, any martial class	Augment at-will exploits
Hunting Spider Style	Dex 13 or drow race, any martial class	Augment at-will exploits

Menacing Brute Style	**Con 13 or Cha 13, any martial class**	**Augment at-will exploits**
Mocking Knave Style	**Cha 13, any martial class**	**Augment at-will exploits**
Nerathi Vanguard Style	**Con 13 or human race, any martial class**	**Augment at-will exploits**
Spear and Shield Style	**Int 13, any martial class, proficiency with a shield**	**Augment at-will exploits**
Spirited Rider	**Wis 13, Mounted Combat, any martial class**	**Augment at-will exploits**
Starlight Duelist Style	**Dex 13 or eladrin race, any martial class**	**Augment at-will exploits**
Swift Blade Style	**Dex 13, Two-Weapon Fighting, any martial class**	**Augment at-will exploits**
Trickster's Blade Style	**Cha 13, any martial class**	**Augment at-will exploits**
True Arrow Style	**Dex 13, any martial class**	**Augment at-will exploits**
Turathi Assault Style	**Int 13 or tiefling race, any martial class**	**Augment at-will exploits**
Untamed Berserker Style	**Con 13, any martial class**	**Augment at-will exploits**
Warborn Fury Style	**Con 13 or warforged race, any martial class**	**Augment at-will exploits**
Warding Shield Style	**Int 13, any martial class, proficient with a shield**	**Augment at-will exploits**

Weapon Mastery Feats

Bola Training	**Dex 13, any martial class**	**Gain proficiency with the bola, and immobilize target instead of damage**
Bola Novice	**Bola Training, 4th level**	**Swap one encounter attack power for *binding bola***
Bola Expert	**Bola Training, 8th level**	**Swap one utility power for *bola recovery***
Bola Specialist	**Bola Training, 10th level**	**Swap one daily attack power for *felling bola***
Net Training	**Str 13, any martial class**	**Gain proficiency with the net, and slow on a hit**
Net Novice	**Net Training, 4th level**	**Swap one encounter attack power for *net sweep***
Net Expert	**Net Training, 8th level**	**Swap one utility power for *net shield***
Net Specialist	**Net Training, 10th level**	**Swap one daily attack power for *net trap***
Whip Training	**Dex 13, any martial class**	**Gain proficiency with the whip, and impose -2 to attack rolls on a hit**
Whip Novice	**Whip Training, 4th level**	**Swap one encounter attack power for *whip snare***
Whip Expert	**Whip Training, 8th level**	**Swap one utility power for *whip crack***
Whip Specialist	**Whip Training, 10th level**	**Swap one daily attack power for *entangling whip***

Domains of Dread: Sunderheart, the Funeral City

by Matthew Sernett

illustrations by Rob Alexander, Jaime Carrillo and Adam Gillespie

***"Behold!** Molesh Ravoon, last scion of the cursed Ravoon line. Legend has it that the Ravoons fled Harrack Unarth, the fabled City of Curses, on the eve of its terrible fall. Yet were they rewarded for their foresight? No! For as a male of the Ravoon line, Molesh was born without eyes! They say the Ravoon men instead possess a special sight, but what Molesh witnesses with his inner eye he will not tell. For you see . . . he cut out his own tongue!"*

—Ringmaster Nightrule, of Nightrule's Carnival Cavalcade

THE SHADOWREALM holds more secrets than all other planes combined. Its fabric is mystery. Its nature is to disguise. Hidden in the endless gloom of the plane lurk domains of dread—dark realms of tragedy and horror that draw victims down in circles of destruction. Few know of these places, for few ever escape. One such is Sunderheart.

Sunderheart is a domain of dread designed for PCs of mid-paragon level. Like other domains of dread, the PCs' primary goal once there is escape, and to do that, they need to learn something of the dark lord of the domain and why it came to be.

A History of Wickedness

When the devil-bound empire of Bael Turath was enthroned as ruler over half the world, Harrack Unarth glittered as the brightest jewel in its crown. Set within the granite cliffs of the massive Grimstone Mountain, Harrack Unarth was fed by the emerald vale nestled close to it gates and slaked by the sapphire waters of three rivers that cascaded spectacularly down the rock behind the city.

Wealth flowed into Harrack Unarth as steadily as Grimriver flowed from it. Bumping boats and jostling caravans brought goods from far-off lands. Wealthy nobles from across Bael Turath built bright villas on the shores of the city's pristine lake. It was known far and wide as a city of spice, pleasure, play, and love. And no love was more famed than that of the Harrack Unarth's rulers, Ivania Dreygu and Vorno Kahnebor.

The story of their romance was legend. Sole heirs to two feuding noble houses, Ivania and Dreygu prevailed despite violent efforts by both families to stop their love. When the last envenomed dagger had fallen from a death-weakened hand, Ivania and Dreygu unified their holdings and took control of Harrack Unarth, the city where they first met. Together they ushered in a festive age. Harrack Unarth became known as the City of Carousal.

The Festering Truth

Yet like most legends, hidden truths lurk behind the bards' honeyed words. The Dreygu and Kahnebor houses spared no love for one another, but they were unified in their desire to separate the young lovers. The Dreygu family, often thought depraved by those who glimpsed its inner life, saw Ivania as a "troubled" girl. And House Kahnebor had long struggled to cover up the results of Vorno's dark appetites. A rare tête-à-tête between Lord Dreygu and Lady Kahnebor led to a resolution to separate them before their infatuation had its inevitable destructive result.

Yet love, true love, grows stronger in adversity, and so it was with Ivania and Vorno. Once forcibly separated, Vorno cut a bloody escape from his own family. A nighttime raid into the Dreygu estate and another murderous flight set them on the path to a pauper's life together. Yet their outraged families could not leave well enough alone. After two years of cat-and-mouse exchanges, ambushes, and assassinations, Ivania and Vorno reclaimed their birthrights.

The two left behind the cities of their births and brokered with the emperor for control of Harrack Unarth, the throne of which was recently made vacant by the drowning of its lord mayor. They held a lavish festival for their arrival, and the celebration never truly ended. Behind closed doors and high garden walls, Ivania and Vorno introduced many of their new friends to increasingly obscure intoxicants, decadent delicacies, and bizarre entertainments. Meanwhile Ivania and Vorno continued to pursue the twisted pastimes for which House Kahnebor had paid to silence. Those they brought into their deadly games rarely remained players for long.

An Emperor's Favor

The expense of the nobles' parties fueled trade to the city, making it a hub of strange goods from around the world. The wealth and rarities flowing to the city drew the eye of the emperor, and Ivania and Vorno became frequent guests at his court. It's said that they returned the favor by setting up secret debaucheries from which only the hosts and their Imperial guest returned.

When the emperor sought infernal ties to secure his rule, he knew to whom he should turn. Ivania and Vorno readily agreed to shelter the first tests of the devils' bargain, but their delight at this prospect had more to do with the opportunity it presented than loyalty to their lord. With the devils close at hand, they could cut their own bargain.

Their accomplice in this secret pact was Nephigor, a devil assigned to oversee the first rites. What Ivania and Vorno sought was nothing less than unending youth. They wished to continue their lives together forever, and for this they would give up their souls. The years would not touch them. Contagion would pass them by. Only by accident or intent could their lives be taken, and when this happened, as Nephigor knew it inevitably would, their souls would pay the price for the joys they shared in life.

A Love in Ruins

When the nobility of all Bael Turath found their way into the devils' bargain, Ivania and Vorno were already enjoying the benefits of their promise. Youthful vigor flooded through them and drove them to greater heights of frivolity and darker depths of depravity. While the rest of the empire reacted with horror and fear at the work that was being wrought, even while the city's lakeside villas were emptied of aristocrats, the people of Harrack Unarth danced in streets strewn with their nobles' gold.

Yet time did take its toll. As the years collected into decades, Vorno, always fitful and prone to bouts of depression, drew deeper within himself and grew increasingly paranoid. He knew his habits had made him many enemies, and now any danger threatened not only his life but his soul. A simple fall could set his spirit on fire for eternity.

Ivania, on the other hand, took vicious joy from living. She tried many times to draw the man she loved from the shadow that skulked through their palace on the river. At times she could evoke his old spirit, cajoling Vorno's cruel streak out for deviant play, but these times came less and less often. The two lovers, once inseparable partners, became estranged.

At length, Ivania grew tired of Vorno, tired of his petty jealousies and his simpering attempts at affection, tired of his watchful shadow lurking on the edge of her vision, tired of his unwashed stink and his suspicious eyes. She resolved to tempt him out of his shell one last time.

The Last Chance for Redemption

Securing the most beautiful girl in the city, Ivania plied the coy young woman with jewels, silks, and exotic spices. Together they drank, ate, danced, and played, all under the hidden gaze of Vorno. With the blush of innocence still upon her cheeks, the girl fell into a narcotic stupor. Ivania left her then, knowing what Vorno would do.

The fiend could not resist. He took her, and when at last the predilections born of his youth overcame him, he devoured her flesh. Ivania had planned for this. She had hidden her toxins beneath the stupefacient spices and liquors. The girl had boiled with poison but blissfully felt nothing. The same could not be said for dread Vorno. He died as terribly as he had lived. Ivania Dreygu watched him die. In Vorno's final moments, he saw in her eyes that not only had she willfully killed him and consigned his soul to the Hells, but that she had also murdered their love. Thus, a dark lord was born.

The City Falls Into Shadow

Harrack Unarth, City of Carousal, took little joy during the funeral celebrations. Many noted the lack of prominent faces among the crowd. With fewer and fewer nobles willing to visit the dangerously decadent city, trade shifted elsewhere. Then the births occurred.

None could say what prompted the deformities, but it was clear a curse had befallen the city. During an early winter, nearly every birth within Harrack Unarth's walls resulted in death for mother or child. Those children who survived were the least malformed.

Many took it as a sign from the gods and left. Others huddled in their homes, pointing to the dark skies and warning of a blizzard. It seems that both were right.

The last to leave the city before the event fled in the middle of the storm. A family legend among the Ravoons says that their ancestors were the last

Blood Curses of Harrack Unarth

Those who survived the Fall of Harrack Unarth carry curses in their bloodlines. Some lines that survived the Fall have died out. Others were killed for the evil that followed them. But over the centuries the cursed blood of those who fled the city on its last day has spread beyond their names. Now many unwittingly carry and share the hereditary curses of Harrack Unarth.

You can use the ideas below as inspiration for curses that plague NPCs the PCs meet. Humans, half-elves, and tieflings might spring to mind as making the most sense for having a hereditary curse, but any race might have fled the city in its final hours, and thus a curse like those below could work on any NPC or PC you have in mind.

Alternatively, perhaps a PC carries such a curse without knowing it. If a player isn't the type to want that kind of surprise tie to the adventure, discuss the idea with the player beforehand, preferably long before you start adventures in Harrack Unarth so that you can allow the player and campaign to own the idea. Such a curse could become an integral part of how a PC acts and looks at the world.

No game mechanics are presented for the curses below. Their effects are not meant to directly impinge play by the PCs. Rather they exist as flavor and motivators for PCs or NPCs.

Murderer's Guilt: A murderer escaped prison on the night of the Fall and fled the city. Now his ancestors are haunted by the spirits of those they kill. The ghosts hover mutely around the killer—chained to that member of the bloodline until his or her death frees them. They are invisible except at midnight, when their glowing forms crowd close with accusing stares.

Death's Kiss: A woman left the city on the night of its fall, not waking her husband for fear he would stop her flight. She did, however, give him one last kiss while he slept. Now members of this bloodline kill those whom they first kiss. Fellow carriers of the curse do not suffer this fate, but the first kiss given by a member of this bloodline to anyone else spells inevitable death within a day. Many unwitting carriers kill favorite relatives or childhood friends. Those who are told of the kiss live in fear of harming those they love or save the death kiss as a weapon against a hated enemy.

Crimson Curse: A noblewoman in flight from the city that dark night mistook a cutthroat for her nephew due to his red surcoat, which was in truth white but soaked in the blood of that relative. The cutthroat fled with the caravan and disappeared before the noblewoman could be informed of her error. Today, members of this bloodline must wear something red or begin to bleed from the skin. The condition can be staved off for a month by killing a criminal.

to look upon Harrack Unarth before the snow and darkness swallowed it. They say demonic-looking undead flew upon the black winds that swirled over the city, and they named them the Sorrowsworn.

Long after the storm lifted, when the world had thawed enough to allow travel to the city, traders found Harrack Unarth empty and as still as a tomb. No bodies lay strewn about. Nothing showed signs of disturbance beyond what unchecked wind and rain could do. In terror the merchants fled.

As stories of the abandoned city spread, the usual robbers and vagabonds sought out and raided Harrack Unarth, and the armies of Bael Turath mobilized to occupy it. Then the curses came to light. Every family who survived the city's fall bore its own unique curse. Every item taken from the city brought woe to its bearer. Harrack Unarth became known as the City of Curses and none dared enter.

Harrack Unarth, City of Curses

Hundreds of years have come and gone since the mysterious fall of Harrack Unarth, and Bael Turath has nearly passed into myth. Yet Harrack Unarth remains surprisingly intact. Cascade Lake and the Grimriver have leaped their banks to flow through the city's streets. Reeds and trees grow among the buildings, but buildings still stand. Gaping windows and empty doorways bear witness to centuries of neglect that have mysteriously left much as it was. The legendary ruin is still avoided by all but the most courageous fools, for many who go there never return. Whether this is due to its curses or to new inhabitants is unknown, but those who've dared approach the ruin tell of smoke rising from the cleft in the mountain where the city lies.

Features of the Area

The Harrack Unarth that exists in the world should have the features and inhabitants that are useful to your adventures there. Consider the following descriptions of features as suggestions to get your creative juices flowing.

1. Verdant Vale: This valley of forests and grassy hills was once covered in farmland. The roads to Harrack Unarth and the Grimriver were studded with inns, taverns, storehouses, and other structures. Today nothing remains but curious hummocks in the grass and the occasional millstone entwined in the roots of a tree. Whatever magic keeps the city from falling apart does not extend to the valley beyond.

2. First Wall: This high, thick wall still guards the city. Trees grow over the roads that once converged near the river fortress, but entrance to the city can still be found there. In addition, the wall has been destroyed in two places, which is a result of an assault on the city when it once served as the base of operations for yuan-ti and cultists of Zehir. Despite their victory over the besiegers, the yuan-ti fled as strange madness claimed many of their number.

3. Lower City: The Lower City housed merchants, artisans, and the underclass. Businesses that served the traders and travelers to the city were common, as were temples to various deities. Today much of the lower city is clogged by a swamp. Two rival ettin bands occupy the lower city, one on each side of the river. Their on-again-off-again warfare and dangers in the flooded city have so far inured them to the disappearances of some of their members on foggy nights. They don't enter the Upper City for fear of the "night fish."

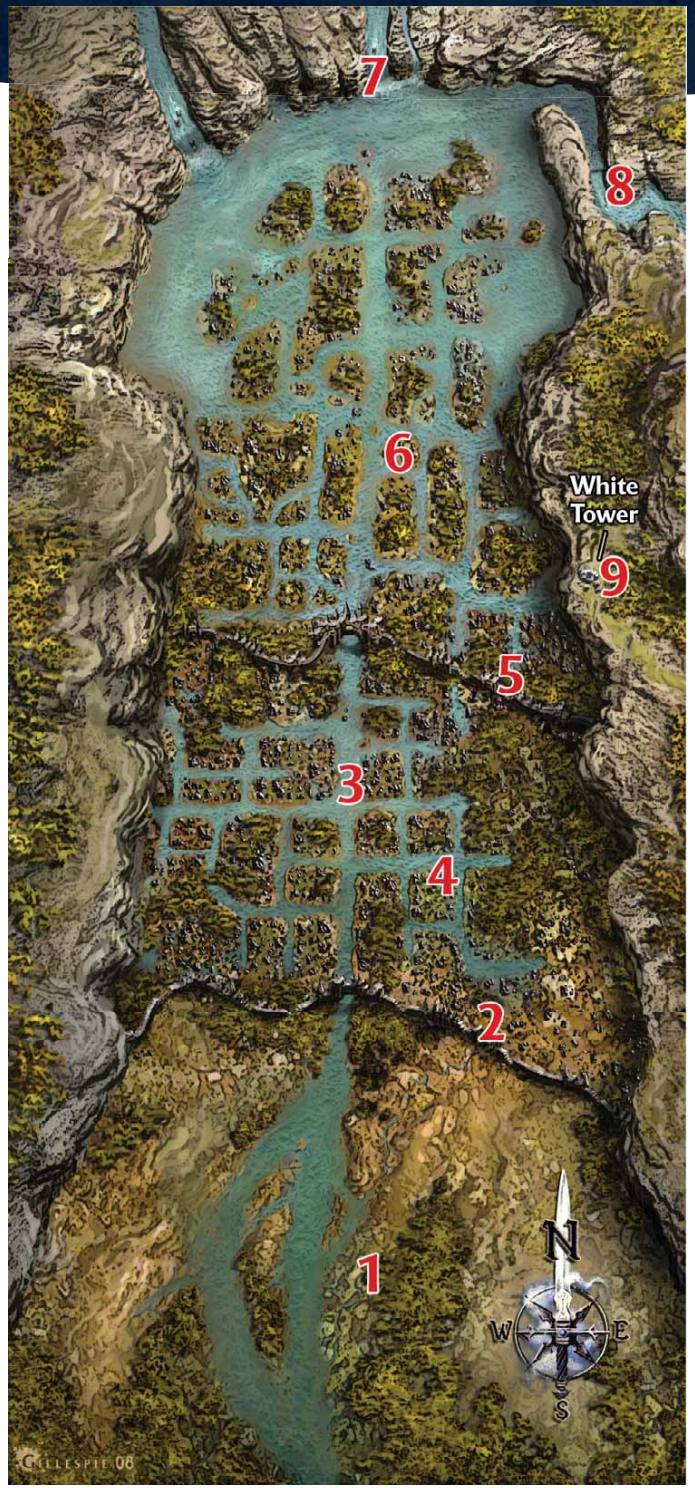
4. Prison: During the rule of Ivania and Vorno, those who committed serious crimes rarely lived long once caught, but in a city of such wealth, the many petty crimes of theft, tax evasion, unpaid debt, and smuggling resulted in the need for a large prison. When the yuan-ti ruled the ruins of Harrack Unarth, they converted this structure into a temple to Zehir. The ettins avoid the prison for fear of its past association with the god of murder and the slithering ghosts they've seen passing behind the rusty bars of its tiny windows.

5. Second Wall: The Second Wall, like the First, has no means of passage except the center fortress. Once the River Palace spanned the river and crouched over two roads, one on each side. Passage into or out of the Inner City was taxed. Although an annoyance for the wealthy individuals who lived or did business beyond the Second Wall, it kept the riffraff out. The River Palace has since collapsed into the water, and the Grimriver covers the roads that ran beside the river. The only means into the Upper City now is to scale the wall or go by water.

6. Upper City: The Upper City was the playground of nobles, the wealthiest families, and those who served their needs. It is now almost entirely flooded, and water laps against the Second Wall. Kuo-toas slide through these waters as soon as the sun sets. They come from the Underdark beyond the Central Falls. For some time they feared the city beyond the wall of water outside their cave, but now some mad quest possesses them. Groups of kuo-toas make nightly forays into the flooded building of the Upper City, searching for something.

7. Central Falls: A wide cavern hides behind the Central Falls, thoroughly disguised by the thundering water and sparkling spray. Once a natural depression eroded from the rock, the space was deepened by the founders of Harrack Unarth and further expanded throughout the years.

Although originally designed as a last fortress in case of invasion, Ivania and Vorno turned it into a private palace for their parties and most vile pursuits. Many taken by the nobles remained behind the falls as prisoners or slaves, their screams never heard or suspected by the pleasure boaters just a few hundred feet away. Ivania and Vorno also added a temple to Torog, patron



Getting the PCs There

Hopefully reading this article inspires a number of adventure ideas and ways to get your PCs involved. Yet if you're looking for a little more help getting your PCs where they need to be, consider the following suggestions. The boundary between the world and Ivania's domain of dread is weakest at the ruins of her city, so if you set adventures there, you can pick any suitably spooky way for them to cross over.

Escape the Underdark: When the PCs are attempting to find a way out of the Underdark, they encounter kuo-toas with many surface-world goods. Although they are of ancient make, they indicate some link to the surface. The PCs fight their way free of the kuo-toas and emerge behind the Central Falls of Harrack Unarth.

Cursed: One of the PCs discovers that an ancestor was one of the escapees from Harrack Unarth, and the PC carries the curse of this bloodline. Investigation results in an encounter with a villain who knows of the hag sisters who live above the city. Their aid appears to be the only hope.

Shipwrecked: The PCs' ship is wrecked by a storm during a battle. They struggle to survive amid floating wreckage, and when they awaken, they float among flotsam and jetsam along the First Wall of the Living City in Sunderheart.

Betrayal: The PCs betray someone who thought them friends. That night, as the PCs celebrate their success, a fog blankets their surroundings. It's so thick that they fear losing one another in it, and as it clears they realize they have somehow gone someplace else.

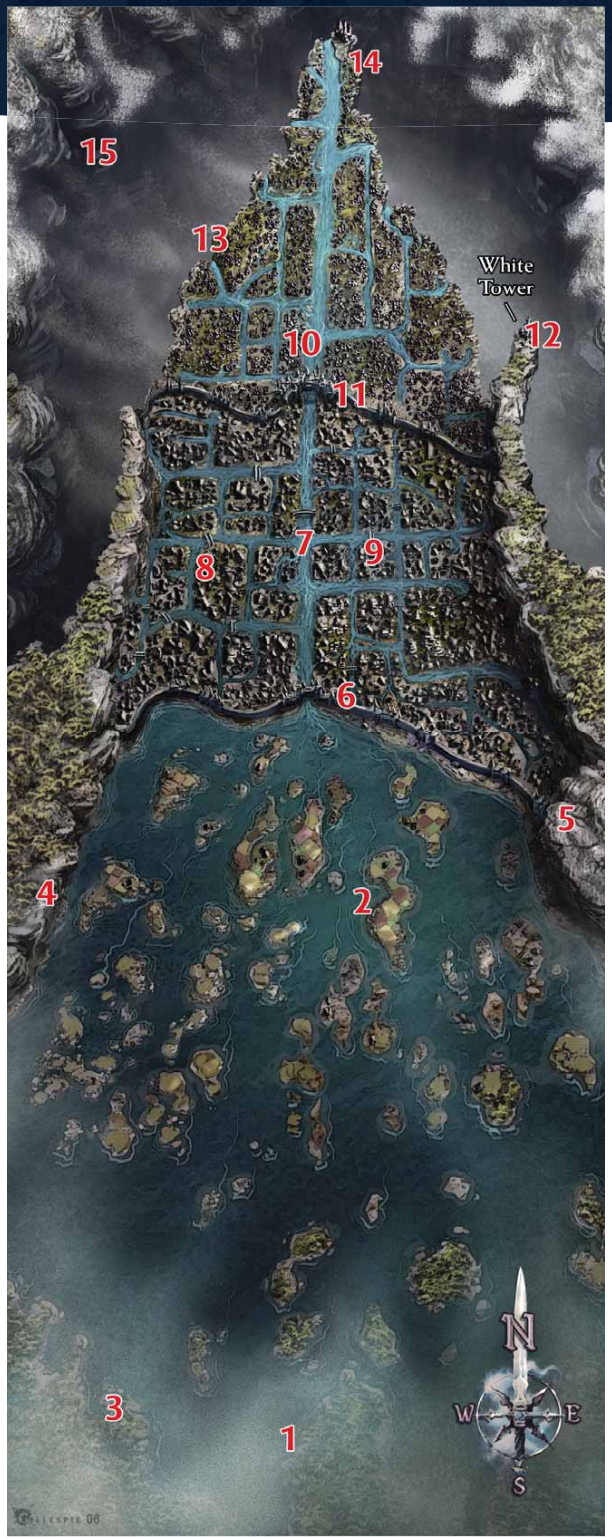
Avarice: A magic item coveted by one of the PCs is said to have been used by one of the heroes of Harrack Unarth. Even after centuries, it lies safely in his tomb in a temple in Harrack Unarth.

Portal Trouble: During one of their delves into a dungeon or another plane, the PCs encounter a portal. When stepping through, they exit a similar portal in the dungeon beneath the ruins of the White Tower.

deity of jailers and torturers. Perhaps this drew the denizens of the Underdark that now live there. Kuo-toas now occupy the structures behind the falls, having come from an Underdark tunnel that opened in an earthquake over a century ago. They have modified the fortress to better resemble its original purpose and expanded Torog's temple.

8. East Falls: Halfway up the cliffside over which the East Falls tumble lies a small cave opening that leads into the lair of two night hags. They came here to study the nature of the legendary curses of Harrack Unarth, and if any exist who can lift such curses, it is one of them. Only one sister is willing to leave their lair. For her investigations and hunting, she rides down to the city on the back of a sure-footed war troll slave. In her lonely forays into the city, she adopts a disguise. Knowing of the ettins' fear of the aquatic monsters, she can commonly be found in the form of a kuo-toa.

9. Ruins of the White Tower: When Bael Turath turned toward an infernal pact for power, the Wizard of the White Tower turned away from Bael Turath. Although long a powerful ally of the city and a frequent guest at Ivania and Vorno's revelries, the wizard sealed his tower when the emperor's plans came to fruition. Nothing was heard of the mage after that, and his tower resisted all attempts at plundering. Over a century later, an earthquake brought the tower down upon the mountain, burying much of the winding stairway leading up to his home, supposedly cut into the mountainside one night by a thousand demons. Now all that remains are the circular foundation and a gaping opening to the underground levels of the tower. Three chimeras use the uppermost level of the dungeon for their lair, but what lies farther below remains a mystery.



Sunderheart

After the blizzard of black winds stole the people of Harrack Unarth from the world, Lady Ivania Dreygu awoke in her chambers, her back aching from the previous night's revelry. She rose unsteadily to her feet and left her dark bedchambers to view the sunrise from a balcony overlooking the Lower City.

She met no servants in her passage through the cold halls of the River Palace, but this suited her mood. When she threw open the doors to survey her city, she beheld not a snow-covered landscape, but a shadow-shrouded and flooded town. She reeled with the knowledge that it was not Harrack Unarth, and yet it was, and she asked the vision before her, "Where am I?"

Just behind her ear, she heard Vorno's voice croak two words, "Sunder . . . heart. . . ." She spun and the door behind her shattered. In the reflection of the other windowed door, she detected a person close behind her, but no matter how she turned, she could not see Vorno. She ran to the mirrored chamber of her bedroom, knowing that no matter how swift Vorno was, he could not escape her notice there. The stench of a corpse clung to her in her flight, almost making her gag. Snatching up a guttering torch as she ran, she fled into the bedroom and there confronted the horror she had become.

Vorno was not lurking behind her. Vorno's corpse was somehow fused to her back. They had pledged to live together forever, and she would be forced to honor that pledge.

Ivania cannot now recall the following days or furor and madness. But from then on she has ruled over Sunderheart during the day, living in denial of the creature on her back. At night, the beast takes control of their conjoined bodies and stalks the dilapidated portion of the River Palace. This undead monstrosity, Vorno, has never spoken a coherent word since, and now none but Ivania, Nephigor, and the Wizard of White Tower know his real identity. All others call him the Ghoul—when they dare to acknowledge his existence.

Black Bay

Beyond the city's walls lies Black Bay, so named for the dark cast of its waters even during the day. Hemmed in by cliffs to the east and west, and swallowed by fog to the south, the waters of Black Bay sluggishly funnel northward through dismal farm islands to press against the city's walls, forming the river and canals beyond. The people of Sunderheart travel Black Bay only when they must and always on the alert for fen hydras and chuuls. Though evidence of the beasts is slim, the people of Sunderheart firmly believe the monsters are drawn by light and thus they ply the bay's waters without illumination.

1. The Mists: Thick fog surrounds the domain of Sunderheart, ringing it in impenetrable gloom over which the sun and moon hesitantly peer, as though mired in the shrouded horizon. No sane person from Sunderheart willingly goes into the Mists. They are rumored to capture people—plucking them from their feet. They are said to assume the likeness of those you know to trick you deeper. They infuse creatures with their evil; even breathing in the Mists risks doom. The Mists are even rumored to distort time, stealing folk away for centuries or hurling them back years before they were born. Sometimes disoriented people or dread beasts emerge from the Mists, apparently taken from a mysterious distant place, but who can say the Mists did not just create them?

2. Farm Islands: These muddy islands are the homes of wary, hard-bitten people who grow produce and keep animals for a living. These halfling and human families keep to themselves, exchanging the dangers of living outside the city and closer to the Mists for greater independence and less frequent visits by ancestors from the City of Tombs. Their small farms are amazingly abundant despite the

unhealthy appearance of their plants and livestock. Black-leafed trees produce thousands of bulbous, bone-colored apples. Sore-covered sows birth dozens of limping piglets. Even so, the farm islands can't feed all the people of Sunderheart.

3. Forest Islands: These foggy islands are revealed by the Mists from time to time, providing tantalizing visions of deer-haunted stands of fine timber. The people of Sunderheart, mostly its farmers, occasionally risk traveling to these islands to hunt or to fell trees. They stay within sight of their boats, ignoring the cries for help they hear in the distance and beating swift retreats when they hear the howl of guulvorgs or the rumble of thunderfury boars.

4. Glimmerhope Crag: This cliff rises hundreds of feet above the waters of Black Bay and forms an impassable barrier to what lies beyond it. The tiefling farmers that live on the land abutting this sheer mountain supplement their income by scratching copper and gold from the rock. They jealously guard this extra source of wealth and have been known to kill those who come to their land uninvited.

5. Cliffs of Despair: The mountain spur called the Cliffs of Despair is accessible by a difficult climb from the Living City, but few make the journey but those who wish to end their lives. Both the path to the White Tower and Bleak Abyss and the path to the cliff overlooking the Black Bay are well worn, but the path to the Black Bay cliff is twice as well-traveled. Most who think to end their lives by hurling themselves into the Bleak Abyss find its unknown depths too terrifying and turn toward the more certain fate that awaits them after a fall from the other side.

The Living City

By day the Living City bustles with boat traffic in its many canals and foot travel over its high-arched bridges. Like any city in the normal world, people work, relax, sell, buy, celebrate, and mourn. Yet as the ever-dusky sky grows truly dark, the people of the Living City retreat inside. Barred doors and shuttered windows hide the light from the ancestral dead whose funeral barges return them from the City of Tombs each night.

6. First Wall: The wall that holds back the waters of Black Bay stands unguarded. By the decree of Lady Dreygu, no one is allowed to inhabit the wall, but dredgers can ply their trade along the wall throughout the day. Dredgers employ long hooked poles and nets on ropes to pull up the flotsam and jetsam that float through the farm islands at night to bump against the wall. These mysterious parcels, barrels, and boxes drift out of the Mists as though cast off from vessels. Indeed, scraps of ships and the bloated bodies of those who sailed them are sometimes hauled up by the dredgers. Rarely, living people are pulled from the water, but the dredgers typically make short work of such unfortunates, fearing evil sent by the Mists. The goods brought in by the dredgers go to the markets of the city, and foodstuffs they can salvage make up for what the farmers cannot produce.

7. Grimriver and Canals: The Black Bay flows slowly into Sunderheart, which is when it becomes the Grimriver and feeds several canals throughout the Living City. It then passes beneath the River Palace, where the echoing tunnels under Ivania's residence serve as the only means of reaching the Tomb City without climbing the Second Wall. The people of Sunderheart ply the canals and Grimriver in punts and barges. Those who can't afford their own boat pay for taxi service when bridges can't get them where they need to go.

8. The Witch of Downing Street: In a narrow alley shadowed by overhanging buildings that nearly touch hangs a wooden sign marked by flaking paint. The image it bears is of a hand with an eye in the palm, the symbol claimed by the Witch of Downing Street. This haggard old human woman is blind in normal sight, her eyelids having been stitched together, but the hand that she doesn't use to lean upon her cane bears a living eye in its palm. Known as a powerful seer and potent caster of hexes and charms, the Witch of Downing Street is a night hag, sister to the two others who live on the outskirts of Harrack Unarth. She was taken by the Mists and adopted the guise of the Witch using *change shape*. As the Witch of Downing Street, she hears many of the city's secrets and discovers more through her invasions of people's dreams. Just as her braver sister in the normal world seeks to find her, the Witch seeks a means of escaping Sunderheart. She believes the secret lies in the Broken Library on the edge of the Bleak Abyss, and she looks for individuals foolish enough to seek it out in the Tomb City, a place she dares not go.

9. Prison: The city watch guards Sunderheart's citizens during the day from crime and brings the criminals they catch to the prison. Justice is an unfamiliar concept in Sunderheart. No judges or juries try cases. No rules about sentences guard prisoners from abuse. Yet few are arrested without being caught in the act or being accused by several prominent witnesses; Ivania frowns upon the disturbances caused by arrests when the culprit is unclear. The only exceptions are attempts to capture those wanted by Lady Dreygu. The guard is merciless in their pursuit, and woe to any civilians who get in their way.

Unknown to Ivania, much of the city guard has been infiltrated by cultists of Zehir, descendants of transplants from Harrack Unarth and converts from the city's population. They protect and serve the madness-plagued yuan-ti brought to Sunderheart from their ruins of the real-world city. The yuan-ti seek the means to destroy Ivania so that they can rule Sunderheart. As city guards, the cultists can arrest those likely to convert to their cause, and they can stay one step ahead of Ivania's attempts to root

out dissenters. The prison serves as a refuge to such individuals and to the yuan-ti, as do watery catacombs beneath several nearby buildings. The yuan-ti have an anathema among their number that they hope to turn upon Lady Dreygu, but the spies they send to discover her vulnerabilities continue to meet untimely ends at the hands of the "gray giants," mysterious winged protectors.

10. River Palace: This fanciful structure sprawls over the Grimriver, and its stained-glass windows cast glittering light out in the gloom of the Living City day and night. The River Palace stands on 12-foot thick walls sunk into the riverbed, with arches forming ten 30-foot wide tunnels that pass all the way under the palace, each navigable by boats. During the day, the citizens of Sunderheart pass beneath the River Palace to ensconce those who died that day in the Tomb City. At night, the dead return through the tunnels to rule the streets and any place left unbarred or unlocked.

Like the city, the River Palace is divided between the living and the dead. The half of the palace toward the Living City is well maintained and brightly lit. Ivania Dreygu rules Sunderheart from there during the day. The back half of the palace, toward the Tomb City, is a crumbling and drafty ruin. The Ghoul wanders these halls at night when the dead stalk the streets of Sunderheart.

The Tomb City

The Living City has huddled in the shadows of its dead for centuries. Beyond the River Palace, graves cluster in alleys, mausoleums crouch amid decaying homes, crypts squat in ancient shops, and sarcophagi loom from eaves like gargoyles. These bodies, their honored dead, have been treated with reverence by a culture that lives with those who have passed into shadow. The Tomb City serves as the graveyard for Sunderheart and the home for hundreds of undead that lie quiescent during the day.

11. Second Wall: Lady Dreygu banned citizens of Sunderheart from mounting the Second Wall, and even the city's undead population obeys this decree. Nevertheless, the wall has inhabitants. The hellbound live in halls in the wall and mount its towers. These tortured creatures are the remnants of the original tests of the pact between Bael Turath and its nobility. The blending of human nature and devilish power was new in those days, and the first efforts were imperfect. The volunteers for those experiments were slain, but Sunderheart has embodied them. Now they act as secret protectors of Ivania and her continued rule over her domain of dread.

12. White Tower: Although the White Tower fell in the real world, it still stands in Sunderheart. The White Tower looms tall at the farthest point on a narrow spur of the Cliffs of Despair. For centuries it has stood, its ivory curves unblemished by time or invader. No windows or doors act as portals into the tower, but a balcony that enwraps its uppermost level offers a possible entrance. Desperate citizens of the city have attempted to climb and plunder the tower, but most are blown off its slick sides by the shearing winds of the Bleak Abyss, and those that reached its balcony never returned. Many think a ghost haunts the tower, because as night falls and people board up their buildings, a light can be seen glimmering on the tower's terrace.

A ghost does haunt the tower, in a manner of speaking. The Wizard of White Tower continues to exist, though he does so as a lich. Like the ancestors of those living in the city, the Wizard was taken to Sunderheart the night Harrack Unarth fell. He has remained in his tower since, destroying all interlopers. He walks the terrace high on his tower during the night to watch the dead claim the Living City, and he scries upon the Ghoul's wanderings, delighting in the torment of Ivania Dreygu.

13. Falls: The canals flow faster beyond the River Palace, quickening as they near the crumbling limits of the Tomb City and finally tumbling over the jagged edge into the Bleak Abyss. Some claim that those who go over Grimriver Falls plummet until they reach the River Styx, but one would have to make the journey to find out.

14. Broken Library: At the tip of the Tomb City, the Broken Library leans over the edge of the Bleak Abyss upon a shard of tilted land beside Grimriver Falls. Cracked in half by a collapse of the land into the Bleak Abyss, the Broken Library's face remains largely intact while its interior chambers, now open to the air and tangled by tumbled bookshelves, spill ancient books into darkness while loose scrolls flutter on the wind. The Broken Library holds lore and artifacts from the height of Bael Turath, but no one born in the Living City knows this. Only survivors from that early time such as the Wizard of the White Tower or clever transplants such as the Witch of Downing Street suspect. Yet the Broken Library is not entirely abandoned. In a twist of fate that bends planar law, the spirit of Nephigor is trapped in the library as a ghost. Those who approach the library often hear his jangling chains and despairing wails long before they see him.

15. Bleak Abyss: The Tomb City is gradually falling into the Bleak Abyss. Each year a little more of the city disappears, collapsing unexpectedly with a roar and vanishing into darkness. The Bleak Abyss is a cold void seemingly without bottom. Even the Mists that ring Sunderheart whirl away into nothingness as they descend into the blackness.

Life and Death in Sunderheart

Sunderheart is populated by the descendants of the original inhabitants of Harrack Unarth and few émigrés—but mostly humans, tieflings, and halflings. All bear the mark of being born in the domain of dread. Extra digits, vestigial twins, and other similar deformities of birth are universal. It's as if each person is in some way doubled. A child stumps across the street on three legs. The barkeep listens to customers with two left ears. A woman walks down the street, half her scalp growing curly blond locks while the other sprouts a luxurious tumble of red. Such deformities are so commonplace that even the most grotesque fail to receive a second glance. Some individuals are born with small enough irregularities that they can be hidden under clothes. Nearly all those who appear normal are destined for service in the River Palace, because Lady Dreygu surrounds herself in a semblance of beauty and normalcy.

Lady Dreygu knows she bears the Ghoul upon her back, but she refuses to acknowledge him, and anyone else who does so suffers her wrath. In an effort to keep his image out of her sight, she has outlawed mirrors that cannot be encompassed in a hand, and all windows must be stained glass. As a result, most homes in Sunderheart lack glass and are instead open apertures that can be firmly shuttered at night. Those with stained glass are brightly lit in their interiors throughout the day to combat the gloom of the Shadowfell. They too can be covered and barred.

The citizens of Sunderheart live normal lives during the day, but as dusk falls they hurry to close buildings tightly and guard against escaping light with shutters and curtains. Each night, the waters of the canals churn with undead and the funeral barges float out of the Tomb City as the ancestors of the living reclaim the city. People out at night or those who allow light from within to show outside find themselves assaulted by undead from all sides. Unlocked doors are also invitations. Fighting for survival or being killed by the undead are viewed equally by most—merely as an unfortunate reality of life—although some citizens take umbrage at individuals slaying their undead loved ones. Otherwise, the undead do not enter locked buildings or seek out the living.

The only exception to this is one night roughly each month when the new moon causes Sunderheart to be at its darkest. On this night, which is called the night of the Black Carnival, the doors and windows of the city are thrown wide open. Light floods the streets from festive hand-held lanterns and pinwheel fireworks on poles. The people of the Living City don frightening masks and set out feast tables in their homes and businesses for the undead. When their ancestors return to partake of the feast, the citizens make merry with them. The only danger to the living on such nights is to be without a mask, but donning one is sure protection.

Lady Ivania Dreygu and the Ghoul

Lady Dreygu rules Sunderheart during the day, living as she did before the fall of Harrack Unarth. She prefers not to concern herself with matters of state. Her people know her will and largely bend to it of their own volition. Instead she whiles away her days in the brightly lit portion of the River Palace in a dream of elegance, excitement, and beauty. Each day she wears a different elaborate gown and attends a new ball, party, or fete. Her servants, chosen for their beauty and ability to disguise their deformities, struggle hard each night with the preparations for the following day, sewing her a new gown, and setting up lavish decorations and a unique feast for her next entertainment. These desperate courtiers survive on a few hours of sleep each night and through ingenious creativity. Those who displease Lady

Dreygu find themselves the target of "special" entertainments that she devises.

Throughout these daily events, the Ghoul hangs from Ivania's back, his eyes shut in a mockery of slumber. Lady Dreygu tries to ignore the Ghoul's presence, and the Ghoul does nothing besides hang in a somewhat fetal position, occasionally opening his eyes to give courtiers sly and hungry glances. For their part, Ivania's servants ignore the Ghoul, pretending as best they can that he does not exist. Lady Dreygu does not like reminders that the Ghoul is there, and she punishes those she catches staring.

As dusk falls, Ivania begs away from her party and retreats to a boudoir ensconced on the border of the ruined half of the palace. There the corpses of those who displeased her have been placed beside the bound forms of criminals or others the City Guard have brought for the Ghoul. Ivania barely spares these unfortunates a glance before retiring to a spare bed. When she shuts her eyes, the Ghoul's open.

When the Ghoul awakens, he feeds. Ivania hangs limply from him then. Overwhelmed by the Ghoul's vile feasting, she pretends sleep—pretends to be deaf to the screams, pretends that tears do not fall from her tightly shut eyes. The ghoul then wanders his ruined half of the River Palace, painting its walls with gore and dragging his victims about to prolong their suffering. Dawn draws him to the boudoir, where the servants have cleaned and drawn a bath for the reawakening of their mistress. Maids await her in an adjacent dressing room, and there they clothe her in the day's new gown and inform her of her schedule of delights.

Although Ivania and the Ghoul spend most of their time in the River Palace, they are not bound there. Similarly, while one claims day and the other night, they are both awake and alert when attacked. However, if just one of them attacks and they are not attacked in return, the sleeper stays inert, not acting despite the *double actions* power described below. Though they are attached to each other and share several statistics, the Ghoul's powers and climb speed, plus powers that the Ghoul shares with Ivania, are listed under a separate entry below for ease of gameplay.

Ivania and the Ghoul's Tactics

It's most advantageous to Ivania and the Ghoul to "sandwich" the PCs' initiatives between them both ways, with some PCs going after one, and some PCs going after the other. This gives their powers time to play off one another and extends the defensive uses of *cloak of shadowy flight* and *defensive leap*.

Although they take separate turns, they act with one will in battle. Thus if Ivania needs space to use her powers or needs two PCs adjacent for *flesh bond*, the Ghoul can use *clutch and hurl* to slide a foe into position. If the two are troubled by a back-rank controller or leader, Ivania can use *cloak of shadowy flight* to bypass barriers.

The Ghoul's climb speed is usable only on his turns. Thus, while climbing, Ivania and the Ghoul do not fall on Ivania's turn, but Ivania cannot move from the climb without using standard climbing rules or *cloak of shadowy flight*.

Ivania **Level 17 Solo Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 8,000

Initiative +15; see also *double actions*; **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 820; **Bloodied** 410
Saving Throws +5; see also *dual brain*.
AC 33; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 31
Immune disease, poison
Speed 6; **Climb** 6
Action Points 2

⊕ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+22 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage.

Shadow Ray (standard; at will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 20; two targets; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 necrotic damage. If the target is affected by ongoing necrotic damage, the *shadow ray* deals an extra 2d6 necrotic damage.

Flesh Bond (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Ranged 20; two adjacent targets; +20 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 6 damage. If the attack hits both targets, each target is restrained until both have saved against this effect.

Cloak of Shadowy Flight (minor; recharge ⚃ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Teleportation**
Ivania and the Ghoul teleport 5 squares and gain concealment until the Ghoul's next turn.

Spin Strike (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves to flank Ivania and the Ghoul)
Ivania and the Ghoul make either a *dagger* or a *bite* attack against the flanking enemy.

Infernal Wrath (minor; encounter)
Ivania and the Ghoul gain a +1 power bonus to the next attack roll one of them makes against an enemy that hit them since either's last turn. If the attack hits and deals damage, the attack deals an extra 5 damage.

Double Actions
Ivania and the Ghoul each roll initiative, each has a turn during a round, and each has a full set of actions (standard, move, minor) on each turn. One set of actions and initiative corresponds to Ivania and her powers. The other set of actions and initiative corresponds to the Ghoul and his powers. Ivania and the Ghoul's ability to take immediate actions refreshes on each initiative.

Dual Brain
At the end of a turn, Ivania and the Ghoul automatically save against the dazed and stunned conditions and against charm effects that a save can end.

Twin Threat
When an enemy provokes an opportunity attack from Ivania and the Ghoul, Ivania and the Ghoul make a *dagger* attack and a *bite* attack against the enemy, respectively.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Athletics +21, Insight +16, Intimidate +20, Stealth +16

Str 26 (+16)	**Dex** 21 (+13)	**Wis** 17 (+11)
Con 20 (+13)	**Int** 18 (+12)	**Cha** 24 (+15)

Equipment dagger

The Ghoul
Speed 6; **Climb** 6
Bite (standard; at-will)
+22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends). If the target is a living creature that is already immobilized, stunned, or unconscious, the bite deals an extra 2d8 damage.
Clutch and Hurl (standard; at-will)
+22 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage, and the Ghoul slides the target up to 3 squares and knocks the target prone.
Claw Frenzy (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Necrotic**
Close burst 1; +22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage and target takes ongoing 5 necrotic (save ends). *Miss:* Half damage.
Defensive Leap (minor; recharge ⚃ ⚄ ⚅)
Ivania and the Ghoul shift 3 squares and gain +2 to all defenses until Ivania's next turn.
Spin Strike (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves to flank Ivania and the Ghoul)
Ivania and the Ghoul make either a *dagger* or a *bite* attack against the flanking enemy.
Infernal Wrath (minor; encounter)
Ivania and the Ghoul gain a +1 power bonus to the next attack roll one of them makes against an enemy that hit them since either's last turn. If the attack hits and deals damage, the attack deals an extra 5 damage.
Double Actions
Ivania and the Ghoul each roll initiative, each has a turn during a round, and each has a full set of actions (standard, move, minor) on each turn. One set of actions and initiative corresponds to Ivania and her powers. The other set of actions and initiative corresponds to the Ghoul and his powers. Ivania and the Ghoul's ability to take immediate actions refreshes on each initiative.
Dual Brain
At the end of a turn, Ivania and the Ghoul automatically save against the dazed and stunned conditions and against charm effects that a save can end.
Twin Threat
When an enemy provokes an opportunity attack from Ivania and the Ghoul, Ivania and the Ghoul make a *dagger* attack and a *bite* attack against the enemy, respectively.

Ivania Dreygu and Harrack Unarth Lore

Characters have no means of knowing about Sunderheart and events there, but obscure lore and legends do exist about the City of Curses and its ancient leaders. A successful History check can reveal the following scraps of knowledge.

DC 25: The City of Curses, once called Harrack Unarth, is a ruin that was a great city in the empire of Bael Turath. One night during the time of that empire, all its citizens vanished. The families of those who escaped that fate by fleeing bear terrible curses. It's said that those who steal from the city also suffer ill fortune. Thus it has remained largely untouched for centuries.

DC 30: Harrack Unarth was lead during its heyday by two legendary lovers, Ivania and Vorno. The feud between their noble families forced them to battle their own kin. The Emperor of Bael Turath was so taken by the story of their bravery and fidelity that he gave them Harrack Unarth to rule.

DC 35: When Bael Turath turned to infernal pacts to secure its rule, the emperor entrusted the rulers of Harrack Unarth with ensuring the safety of the pacts. The first humans to become tieflings did so behind the walls of Harrack Unarth.

Killing Ivania Dreygu and Escaping Sunderheart

Simple destruction does not end the existence of Ivania Dreygu and the Ghoul. Unless specific conditions are met, their bodies lie dead for one day and one night. During this time, those involved in the death of Ivania and the Ghoul can leave through the Mists, emerging in the world outside the City of Curses. Unfortunately, the odd balance between life and death in Sunderheart is disrupted, and for that

day and night, the undead residents of the Tomb City swarm over Sunderheart slaying with abandon. PCs seeking to escape after a simple fight will have many lives on their consciences. At the end of that terrible time, the body of Ivania and the Ghoul dissolves away as they reappear in the River Palace.

Another path to freedom exists that is less dangerous for the people of Sunderheart but perhaps just as morally ambiguous. The PCs must kill the hellbound and convince the Wizard of the White Tower to leave his home and confront Ivania and the Ghoul. While the lich and dark lord battle, the PCs can escape by riding a boat over Grimriver Falls to splash down into the River Styx. Yet as they pass the Broken Library, the ghost of Nephigor lashes its chains around their vessel and infuses it with his spirit. This puts the PCs' journey on the Styx at the mercy of the devil who then travels through the Nine Hells seeking an infernal powerful enough to embody his spirit in immortal form once again.

Ivania and the Ghoul can be permanently destroyed in one of two ways. One way is for the PCs to have Ivania say Vorno's name and be remorseful of her betrayal, whereupon both their souls are transported to the Nine Hells to fulfill their bargain with Nephigor. The other way is far more likely but still quite difficult. The PCs must engage the Ghoul without fighting back or awakening Ivania's will. They then must lure the Ghoul on a chase through the River Palace to the mirrored bedchambers where Vorno was murdered and where Ivania first confronted the horror of her new existence. This dark complex of rooms lies deep in the least used area of the River Palace. There the PCs must slay them. If the PCs can achieve either of these two epic aims, Sunderheart ceases to be a domain of dread, and all the good and unaligned people trapped there are returned to the world outside Harrack Unarth. Those of evil disposition are instead shifted to another domain of dread.

The devil ghost Nephigor has discovered all these means through his studies. Of course, his preference is for the "redemption" of the Wizard of the White Tower. Still, he is not above advising killing Ivania to put the citizens' blood on the PCs' hands. Nephigor does not willingly tell the PCs how to dissolve the domain of dread, but the PCs can discover this option if they do enough undisturbed research in the Broken Library, bring enough materials from the Library to the Witch of Downing Street (three trips regardless of how much the PCs can carry), or trick the devil into talking about this option in some manner.

Nephigor

When the black winds howled about Harrack Unarth, Nephigor was in the city's grand library, seeking a means of prolonging his time out of the Nine Hells. He got more than he bargained for. Devils are not supposed to have ghosts. Their deaths are impermanent things that cast them back to the fiery pit to regain bodies. Yet when the howling winds shattered the library, Nephigor slid into darkness greater than any he had known. The chain devil "awoke" in the Broken Library. His body transparent, his form intangible—if Nephigor is not a ghost, he cannot fathom what else he might be.

Since then, Nephigor has tested the boundaries of his prison and the capabilities of his body countless times. He has established that he is doomed to haunt the Broken Library until someone else frees him. He can travel through every level of the library, from its cracked catacombs to its sliding roof, but he cannot step one inch beyond its floors. He can be "killed," but he inevitably returns after three nights.

Existing in this state for centuries, Nephigor has grown somewhat mad. Yet the devil is the most knowledgeable individual about Sunderheart, Harrack Unarth, and Bael Turath. He has read nearly every book and scroll in the Broken Library, and the hellbound act as his eyes and ears in the Living City. If the PCs seek to learn something about these things, they need to deal with Nephigor—one way or another.

Nephighor	**Level 14 Elite Controller**
Medium shadow humanoid (devil, undead)	XP 2,000
Initiative +14;	**Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
HP 187; **Bloodied** 93	
Saving Throws +2	
AC 28; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 26	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** insubstantial	
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing	
Action Points 1	
⊕ **Ghostly Chain** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**	
Reach 4; +18 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 6 necrotic damage and the target is slowed. If the target is restrained, the attack deals an extra 2d6 necrotic damage.	
⸸ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)	
Nephigor makes two *ghostly chain* attacks.	
✧ **Chains of Bondage** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Necrotic**	
Close burst 4; enemies only; +18 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 6 necrotic damage and targets are restrained (save ends).	
✧ **Chains of Ghostly Vengeance** (when first bloodied)	
Nephigor immediately uses *chains of bondage* even if it has not recharged.	
✧ **Grip of Fear** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**	
Close burst 4; enemies only; +18 vs. Reflex (+21 vs. restrained targets); 1d10 + 6 psychic damage and targets take ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).	
Threatening Reach	
Nephigor can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within his reach (4 squares).	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** All
Skills Arcana +20, History +20, Insight +15, Intimidate +18, Religion +20, Stealth +19	
Str 23 (+13)	**Dex** 24 (+14)	**Wis** 17 (+10)
Con 14 (+9)	**Int** 17 (+10)	**Cha** 22 (+13)

Nephigor's Tactics

Nephigor uses his phasing ability to arise in the middle of the PCs. He then uses *chains of bondage*, followed closely by *grip of fear*. *Threatening reach* allows Nephigor to make extra attacks along with *double attack* until his powers recharge. Should the PCs kill him, Nephigor fades away with a mocking laugh.

The Hellbound

The first attempts at binding infernal power to human forms did not achieve a result the Emperor of Bael Turath could agree to. These tortured unfortunates were killed, although some survived for the duration of various "tests." When Sunderheart formed in the Shadowfell, the souls of these creatures were embodied in their former forms to suit the domain's obscure purpose. Now they act as secret guardians to Lady Dreygu's rule and as spies for Nephigor.

The hellbound live in the Second Wall and use it as the base of operations for their espionage. At night they fly over the city, and during the day they skulk in alleys and dark passages of the River Palace. The hellbound wear great ragged gray cloaks to disguise their horrific appearances, and they are experts at hiding and sneaking about, but the inhabitants of Sunderheart sometimes notice their huge lurking forms. The people have learned to ignore these glimpses of the "gray giants." Those who make issue of them meet messy ends. If Ivania notices the hellbound, she does not show it. Whether this is a disavowal of their presence in the manner that is similar to her denial of the existence of the Ghoul or a special blindness, none can say.

The hellbound occupy most of their time watching for dissension, and they are implacable foes of the Zehir cultists when they discover them. They also give the information they discover to Nephigor, but they are not beholden to his commands. Indeed, they appear to be influenced by another director and spoken to by voices no one else can hear. Even so, the hellbound rise to the defense of Nephigor and Ivania and the Ghoul, although they do try to avoid Ivania's notice.

Hellbound Hunter **Level 15 Soldier**
Large immortal humanoid (devil) XP 1,200

Initiative +15; **Senses** Perception +11; darkvision
HP 149; **Bloodied** 74
AC 31; **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 27
Resist 5 fire
Speed 8, fly 8

⊕ **Glaive** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 3; +22 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage. If the target is prone, the attack deals an extra 2d6 damage.

↭ **Cutting Sweep** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires glaive; close blast 3; +20 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 damage and target is knocked prone.

↭ **Fiery Retaliation** (when the hellbound hunter is immobilized, restrained, or stunned; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fire, Teleport**
Close burst 1; +20 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 fire damage, and the target gains the condition that triggered this attack with the same duration.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Insight +16, Stealth +18

Str 24 (+14)	**Dex** 19 (+11)	**Wis** 20 (+12)
Con 21 (+12)	**Int** 13 (+8)	**Cha** 14 (+9)

Equipment glaive

Hellbound Hunter Tactics

Hellbound hunters like to work in groups, with one making sweep attacks and the others capitalizing on prone foes. They dislike being trapped, and they react with *fiery retaliation* power to give foes a reason to retreat and regroup.

Hellbound Bloodburner **Level 15 Skirmisher**
Large immortal humanoid (devil) XP 1,200

Initiative +16; **Senses** Perception +11; darkvision
HP 146; **Bloodied** 73
AC 29; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 26
Resist 10 fire
Speed 8, fly 8 (hover)

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage.

⊕ **Bloodfire Claws** (standard; recharge after successful fly by attack)
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage. *Secondary Attack:* Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends) and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Fiery Flyby Attack (standard; at will)
The hellbound bloodburner flies up to 8 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. If the attack hits an enemy that is taking ongoing fire damage, the enemy takes an extra 2d6 fire damage. The hellbound bloodburner doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Insight +16, Stealth +18

Str 20 (+12)	**Dex** 24 (+14)	**Wis** 18 (+11)
Con 18 (+11)	**Int** 13 (+8)	**Cha** 14 (+9)

Hellbound Bloodburner Tactics

Hellbound bloodburners use their superior aerial mobility to make deadly flyby attacks after first setting foes aflame with their *bloodfire claws* power. They use their reach to its best potential, attacking with *bloodfire claws* with reach, and then escaping with *fiery flyby attack* when the foe moves adjacent to attack. When working in a group, hellbound bloodburners trade positions, with those in melee taking to the air after making *bloodfire claws* attacks and those in the air making *fiery flyby attacks*.

Hellbound Flamecaller	Level 15 Lurker
Large immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 1,200
Initiative +19; **Senses** Perception +19; darkvision	
HP 114; **Bloodied** 57	
AC 29; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 28	
Resist 5 fire	
Speed 8, fly 8	
Claw (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage.	
Shortbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 15/30; +20 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 fire damage.	
Fiendish Flurry (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**	
Requires shortbow; close blast 5; +20 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 fire damage.	
Combat Advantage	
The hellbound deals an extra 2d8 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target that it has combat advantage against.	
Fiery Invisibility (immediate reaction, when the hellbound flamecaller is hit by a melee attack; recharge ⚃ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fire, Illusion**	
Close burst 1; +20 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 fire damage. *Effect:* The hellbound flamecaller is invisible until it hits with an attack or the encounter ends.	
Sniper	
A hidden hellbound flamecaller that misses with a ranged attack remains hidden.	
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal	
Skills Insight +19, Stealth +20	
Str 19 (+11) **Dex** 26 (+15) **Wis** 24 (+14)	
Con 18 (+11) **Int** 15 (+9) **Cha** 14 (+9)	
Equipment shortbow	

Hellbound Flamecaller Tactics

A hellbound flamecaller uses its bow to fire arrows of pure fire. If prefers to attack from ambush at a distance, then it allows foes to close before unleashing *a fiendish flurry*. The flamecaller flirts with danger, hoping a melee attack hits so that it can use *fiery invisibility* to maneuver and devastate enemies with its other attacks, especially *fiendish flurry*.

Adventures in Sunderheart

The main adventure in Sunderheart should be finding out how to escape and then leaving, but the PCs might have a number of encounters and adventures within that larger quest. Below are some ideas to get you started.

Taken: After the PCs perform a notable deed, children from a farm island seek out the PCs. Their parents went on a hunting trip on one of the nearby forested islands and didn't return. The Mists are barely touching the far side of the island, so they must still be there. If the PCs can't find the parents, the children will lose their home and become beggars on the streets.

Unlikely Allies: The City Guard seeks to arrest the PCs, but it's just a ploy by the cultists of Zehir to speak with them. The yuan-ti hope to ally with the PCs in an assault upon the tunnels in and under the Second Wall. They hope to eliminate the hellbound and the creatures allied with them to open up the opportunity for an assault on the River Palace.

Twin Trouble: After gaining information about a PC while in other guises, the Witch of Downing Street takes the form of the PC, pretending to be an unwitting twin, somehow lost to the Shadowfell long ago. This twin bears no deformities and thus could not have been born in Sunderheart. The night hag's aim is to flee with the PCs, and she uses the twin form and the guise of the Witch to manipulate the PCs into helping her escape.

Her Ladyship's Service: Lady Dreygu hears of the PCs, and she invites them to join her for dinner. Servants inform them of the proper protocols to avoid her anger (and of what will befall them if the PCs enrage her) just before the feast. Even if some PCs treat her rudely, she is a forgiving host, acting particularly kindly toward a beautiful or handsome PC. Assuming the encounter doesn't end in bloodshed, Lady Dreygu tasks the PCs with various heroics (battling fen hydras that threaten farms, destroying the Wizard of White Tower, and so on), lavishing gifts upon the PCs after their successes. These actions are a pretense to win the trust of the PCs enough to capture a lone PC and keep him or her for daytime diversions. ("Don't worry my pet. I won't let *him* have you.")

About the Author

Matthew Sernett has been a designer of 4th Edition, the editor-in-chief of *Dragon* Magazine, a pizza cook, an onion packer, and an assembly line worker in a spring factory. In 1999, while working for *Men's Health* Magazine, he narrowly avoided being a wardrobe tracker in the male fashion industry.

Refuge in the Mournland: Stillwater Station

BY GLENN MCDONALD
illustration by Ron Lemen

IN THE PERPETUAL GLOOM OF OLD CYRE, *a nascent frontier town offers shelter to travelers, and it provides a home to those stubborn, damaged, or haunted enough to linger in the Mournland.*

THE DISPATCH

Ashford Terra, gentleman rogue, is renowned for his ability to fence virtually any item in Khorvaire. Operating primarily out of Sharn, in recent years he has specialized in trafficking artifacts and items recovered from the blasted wastes of the Mournland. Although loath to visit the cursed lands of Old Cyre, he must occasionally do so in pursuit of business interests. He sent the following dispatch to his compatriot, the Sharn tavern keeper Carnaby Goebb:

. . . of all my adventures on this, my most recent and hopefully final expedition to Old Cyre, the last was surely the strangest. Consider this, friend Carnaby: There exists now, on the fetid soil of the Mournland, an actual frontier town! Just south of Lake Cyre, on the old lightning rail line to Metrol, an unlikely alliance of settlers and scavengers has founded a permanent community. They call it Stillwater Station, and although it is a primitive and wild place, it is indeed a functioning trading post. Had I not seen it with mine own eyes, I would never have believed it. Fresh water, a tavern, and a modest offering of goods . . .

THE MOURNLAND

Since the arcane cataclysm known as Day of Mourning, the lands within the old nation of Cyre are among the most inhospitable in all Eberron. Shrouded in a perpetual dead-gray mist, the region is haunted by mutated monsters, sentient spells, and victims of the Last War who linger in the twilight between the living and the dead.

The Mournland, it's often said, is now quite literally a vast, open grave. The warm bodies of dead soldiers remain sprawled on the field of combat, refusing to decompose. Indeed, they occasionally rise to continue fighting a war that has long since ended. Plants and animals native to old Cyre have long since perished, or they have been twisted and mutated by arcane energy into foul perversions. Death holds dominion in the Mournland.

Yet even in this cursed and blasted land, at least one small community is tenaciously holding its ground.

The Founding of Stillwater Station

In the days preceding the Day of Mourning, Cyran battlefield commander Rhysimor Maceck led his platoon on a scouting mission into a cliffside cave complex on the southern shore of Lake Cyre. The cataclysm that razed the nation that fateful day collapsed the entry tunnel, trapping the veteran dwarf warlord and his platoon underground.

After several harrowing and deadly weeks in the caverns, in which he lost his soldiers one by one, Rhysimor emerged into the dead-gray light of the Mournland. The sole survivor of his unit, Rhysimor tracked his way back to the main battle group, only to find the still-warm remains of his former comrades sprawled on the cracked earth.

Rhysimor eventually escaped the Mournland and spent several months trying to bury his past by accepting mercenary work in Breland, Thrane, and as far away as Xen'drik. But in his heart, Rhysimor never left his homeland, and he longed to return to Cyre.

And so he did. For another year, Rhysimor led expeditions into the Mournland, recovering artifacts and hoping to unravel the mystery of the Day of Mourning. His secret hope: That the damage to his homeland could somehow be reversed; that Cyre would one day rise again from the ashes of the cataclysm.

The sole survivor of his unit, Rhysimor tracked his way back to the main battle group, only to find the still-warm remains of his former comrades sprawled on the cracked earth.

In his travels through the Mournland, Rhysimor discovered he was not alone in his quest. Others had opted to remain in Old Cyre, driven by sentiment, obstinacy, or madness. Among these fellow travelers was a minor scion of the House of Making, the lady Hana Aurora d'Cannith. Originally from the now-ruined city of Eston, former seat of power for House Cannith, Hana was also obsessed with uncovering the cause of the cataclysm. Leveraging what resources she could from her aristocratic heritage, she devoted herself to arcane studies and exploration of the ruins of Old Cyre.

Traveling together along the abandoned lightning rail line south of Lake Cyre, the two discovered the station called Stillwater Station. Incredibly, the station was relatively undamaged by the cataclysm and in fact housed several lightning rail passenger and freight cars. In addition, the station had a working ground well that reliably brought forth fresh, clean water. The original denizens of the stopover community, however, were nowhere to be found.

And so Rhysimor and Hana began establishing a base of operations. Using conductor stones from the abandoned railway line, Hana combined arcane magic with certain Cannith magical technologies to erect a defensive perimeter. Her unique blend of magic produced an energy field that usually kept the Mournland's most fearsome predators at bay.

Soon Stillwater Station began attracting attention from the many scavenger groups that would pass through the area. Hana and Rhysimor enforced strict rules to encourage fair trade, and many disparate groups found mutual benefit in a permanent market within the boundaries of the Mournland proper. With the arrival of the half-elf herbalist and alchemist called Lyric, the founders established a limited system of agriculture by cultivating fields of modified thornweeds in the sandy soil.

Currently at more than 100 residents and counting, Stillwater Station is composed of a dozen or so new and repurposed structures centered on the main station. Aside from the warforged domains of the Lord of Blades, it is the first and only permanent community in the Mournland—a ramshackle barter town on the most forbidding of frontiers.

The Station Market

The settlers of Stillwater have repurposed the old station platform and lightning rail cars into an open-air trading market. The rusting lightning rail cars have long since settled into the hard ground, and the original wooden platform and overhead shelter are riddled with holes and rotting through.

Still, the traders here are nothing if not resourceful, and they have patched up their market with temporary repairs and upgrades. The rail cars have been converted into cramped but serviceable market stalls and shops. Other merchants have created new structures out of scrap wood and metal on the platform proper. They even have a few booths built almost entirely out of the bamboolike thornwood material harvested by the settlers.

Security in the market is preserved by way of an odd sort of collective honor system among the poachers and scavengers of the Mournland. All participants at the market realize the value of having a stable trading community in the harsh environs of Old Cyre. Merchants are steely-eyed and wary, and they raise a cry at the slightest hint of trickery or aggression. Anyone foolish enough to brazenly rob another at the market can expect to be swarmed instantly by all the other traders and scavengers.

While violent robbery or outright thievery is strictly forbidden, subtler larcenies are tolerated. As with virtually any market, sellers try to leverage unfair prices, and they occasionally attempt to pass off various fakes and counterfeits—particularly artifacts from Old Cyre.

The Station Merchants

Some of the principal merchants of Stillwater Station are listed below. Most basic goods and services can be obtained, or at least approximated, somewhere in the station market. Prices and inventory can vary greatly, depending on recent trade.

The Station Free Market: A former Karrnathi fighter, Chann Illiescii led scavenging expeditions for various sponsors before burning one too many bridges, with one too many shady deals. Now pursued in the free lands by several wronged parties, he runs the Station Free Market—a large stall that occupies two entire lightning rail cars. Chann sells basic adventuring gear, items, tools, rations, and an astounding array of random detritus.

The coal in the abandoned forge has been somehow altered by the arcane energy of the Mournland

Scabs' Smithy: Once a respected Cyran weaponsmith, Weston "Scabs" Yeardley was gravely wounded and terribly disfigured on the Day of Mourning. He now buys, sells, crafts, and repairs weaponry—mostly items scavenged from the battlefields of Old Cyre. He has constructed a functional smithy from the ruins of an existing forge on the station grounds.

Scabs has a carefully guarded secret: The coal in the abandoned forge has been somehow altered by the arcane energy of the Mournland and is apparently inexhaustible—it burns, but does not burn out. When he can arrange transport, Scabs intends to escape Stillwater with the magic coal and make his fortune in the civilized lands. Scabs buys and sells basic armor and weapons.

The Abode: A recently arrived resident of Stillwater, and wartime friend of Rhysimor Maceck, Hamish Jod is a well-connected merchant and arms dealer with connections to outside groups interested in the plunder of the Mournland. A tough, wiry halfling, he has multiple contacts in Karrnath, New Cyre, Morgrave University, and House Cannith. He also keeps a backdoor connection with the Emerald Claw, with whom he is occasionally willing to do business—if the price is right.

Hamish is constantly attended by two bodyguards—identical twin female Valenar elves who owe him a blood debt. The Abode, easily the most impressive structure on the market platform, deals in exotic and masterwork weapons, magic items, artwork, cultural artifacts, and other high-end valuables.

Lyric's Herbs and Serums: The mysterious half-elf cleric Lyric is a talented alchemist and herbalist, and she is considered by most to be the third founder of Stillwater Station. Lyric developed the magical technique by which Stillwater residents can harvest edible thornweeds. Lyric is a mute, so far as anyone knows, and she communicates through her constant companion, a young changeling orphan called Devlin.

The Rail Station: Stillwater's sole tavern and inn, the Rail Station occupies the bulk of the main station building and is run by Stillwater's founders Rhysimor Maceck and Hana Aurora d'Cannith. It is the central meeting place and social spot for the community, and its common room serves as an indoor market and town hall.

Rhysimor and Hana have rebuilt and floored the station's rafters to serve as a barracks-style room with fourteen beds total. The inn has three private rooms to let—refurbished storerooms on the ground floor. Rhysimor and Hana keep their own quarters beneath the station building in a series of converted cellar rooms with multiple emergency exits to the outside. The community's precious water well is located in a walled courtyard at the rear entrance of the inn.

Haven: The place called Haven is Stillwater's most carefully guarded secret. In fact, only the town's three founders—Hana, Rhysimor and the Lyric—know of its unique nature. Ostensibly the town's nondenominational temple and infirmary, it is a small structure of stone and mortar on the perimeter of the walled courtyard behind the main station building.

Here Hana and Lyric attend to the sick and dying. When the founders discovered this portal, they pledged to keep it secret and employ it surreptitiously. They fear that if the true nature of Haven were to become common knowledge, Stillwater would quickly be overrun by powerful agencies looking to exploit such a valuable resource.

Scabs has a carefully guarded secret: The coal in the abandoned forge has been somehow altered by the arcane energy of the Mournland and is apparently inexhaustible—it burns, but does not burn out.

The Surrounds

The landscape around Stillwater Station proper suggests that the area was once, long ago, home to several small lakes, ponds, and waterways. The soil is hardpacked or sandy, and petrified driftwood can be scavenged in many nearby locations.

The Glass Dunes

A few hundred yards north of the station stretches an expanse of dunes that have been partially turned to glass by the events of the Day of Mourning. The eastern portion of this area was largely unaffected, but to the west the sand becomes increasingly littered with shards of glass. On the western end of the field, the sand has been wholly fused into giant glass dunes. Intact surfaces are sheer and slippery, while other mounds have shattered into treacherous piles of razor-sharp slivers.

Toward the northwest corner of the dunes is a cave complex formed entirely from glass. None know whether these caves existed before the cataclysm or were somehow formed in its wake. The caves have recently been cleared and occupied by the Anand, a congregation of doomsday cultists originally from Q'Barra. The Anand send splinter groups far and wide in search of artifacts presaging the ultimate demise of Eberron. But, as always, their methods and purposes are inscrutable, and Stillwater's founders are eyeing their new neighbors warily.

The Thornweed Fields

With the help of resident herbalist Lyric, the residents of Stillwater Station have established a limited system of agriculture. Lyric has alchemically engineered a variant of the thornweed plant that grows throughout the Mournland. The plants produce a tough, fibrous material, similar to bamboo, that can be hardened for use in construction, stripped and braided into rope, or boiled into a tasteless but nutritious mash.

Residents of Stillwater take turns cultivating and harvesting the thornweed fields south of the station proper. The thornweed fields are also watched over by the shifter cleric Sen-Tulchinne, whose resolve to commune once again with the land of Cyre is matched only by his tenuous grip on reality.

Memorial Gulch

The bodies of the dead do not decompose in the Mournland, so the residents of Stillwater have opted for alternative funereal methods. Unable to bring themselves to inter warm bodies, Stillwater residents instead arrange the dead in dignified seated and standing positions in a narrow gulch about a mile east of the station. Most of the bodies here are of soldiers—Cyran and Karrnathi predominantly—cleared from a nearby battlefield. But any who die in Stillwater, or whose bodies are otherwise recovered in the vicinity, are taken to this macabre memorial to abide in eternal vigilance.

Occasionally, the dead have been known to move about of their own volition, but they return to their posts eventually. Or so reports the sole living resident of Memorial Gulch, the feral goblin Caggle, a retired Darguun scavenger who has appointed himself the official gravekeeper of Stillwater Station. Caggle has hollowed out a small, squalid den near the gulch and spends his days in one-sided conversation with his neighbors.

The Flats

Adjacent to the station are a series of alkali flats—the remains of a small, since-evaporated lake. The hard dry ground is ideal for camping, and so the flats are used as a stopping-over place for groups of travelers too large to make camp within the station grounds.

Even the most ruthless and warlike of the scavenger groups recognize the value of a permanent community for barter and trade within the Mournland. As such, keeping the peace is considered a priority in the station, and by extension, on the Flats. The lake bed harbors strange bedfellows, indeed. Darguun goblins and Valenar elves. Kraken Bay pirates and House Deneith sellswords. In a busy night on the Flats, one might see an official Karrnath expedition bartering with independent poachers operating out of Thrane or Breland. Or a party of warforged

from the interior trading water for metal with dinosaur-mounted halflings from the Talenta Plains.

The Perimeter Stones

Around the perimeter of the town, the founders of Stillwater have arranged a series of thirteen lightning rail stones scavenged from the old rail lines of Cyre. Magically altered by Hana d'Cannith, the stones function as a protective energy field, albeit one of unpredictable utility. The circle seems particularly effective at repelling the largest and most dangerous of the living spells that wander the Mournland. The sentient spells, unable to pass beyond the ring of stones, linger for a few hours or days, slowly circling the town, before eventually drifting away.

The energy field occasionally blocks creatures, as well. In fact, the perimeter stones once repelled a gargantuan mutated bulette intent on devouring Stillwater whole. However, smaller magical creatures and living spells have been known to pass through the barrier and attack the town. Hana often examines the various individual perimeter stones, trying to understand and better control their power.

Adventure Hooks

- In a secret joint operation, representatives of House Sivis and House Orien arrived recently in Stillwater to establish a speaking stone connection, and ascertain whether it is at all possible to make economic inroads into the Mournland. They are posing as scavengers and tomb raiders, but already have a set of prototype *augmented speaking stones* set up at a secret location in the Flats.
- The ominous figure known only as the Herald is a tall, sunscorched human evangelical who wanders the ruins of the Mournland and occasionally passes through Stillwater Station. He encourages all "warmbloods" and "fleshlings" to accompany him back to his master, the Lord of Blades, where they can be remade into new "elevated, inspired beings of steel." The Herald's message puzzles longtime Mournland travelers. Has the Lord of Blades come across a new magic or technology that can transform the living into constructs? If so, why is the Herald still human? Or is he just another mad Mournland casualty?
- The wall of heavy fog that encircles the Mournland usually hovers about 5 miles away from Stillwater Station, on the shores of Lake Cyre. Occasionally, however, the fog blows in from the lake and shrouds Stillwater Station entirely for a few hours or sometimes days. When this happens, the residents of Stillwater hunker down and wait out the shapes and forms that move through the mist with otherworldly howls.
- Torque, a warforged merchant affiliated with the less militant communities in the Mournland, regularly brings items into town for trade. Often these are more-or-less edible foodstuffs, cooked and smoked carcasses of strange creatures, which he trades for wood and scrap metal. Brusque and menacing, he refuses to converse about anything other than the terms of trade. One day, Torque brings a collection of documents and artifacts that apparently refer to the cataclysm of the Day of Mourning. Where did these items come from? Can Torque be convinced to guide adventurers back to the source?
- Ikar's Salvage, a large group of bloodthirsty scavengers and outlaws who wander the territory north of Stillwater Station, have on occasion attempted to menace and intimidate Stillwater. After several tense staredowns, Ikar has been told his group is no longer welcome in Stillwater Station. Ikar has so far opted to leave the town alone, but Rhysimor and Hana worry that he might return someday to attack the settlement in hopes of making it his permanent base of operations.

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer. He has been writing Eberron content for the D&D website and print for some time now, as well as writing as a freelancer for numerous other professional publications of all sorts.

Death & Dying

By Rob Heinsoo and James Wyatt

Death Matters

Rob Heinsoo: We had a few design elements in 4th Edition that took shape early and maintained that shape. Death and dying wasn't one of those elements. We tried at least four different death systems with vastly different consequences.

Enough disagreement arose about the goals of a death-and-dying system that we held meetings to negotiate what we wanted. Some people argued that death was passé—the example of online RPGs in which characters respawned indicated players wanted to be free of death's threat. Most of us didn't buy that reasoning. We knew that online RPGs had their own separate logic. Our game required a realistic possibility of defeat and death to maintain its excitement and dramatic tension.

Heroes are defined by the villains they face and the challenges they overcome. Take away a plausible threat of death and failure, and heroes become boring automatons. So what we needed were game mechanics for death that worried players, keeping them on their toes. But the mechanics still had to be fun at the table, and they couldn't take players out of the game too often or for too long.

No one looks forward to his or her character dying. But when it happens, it had better be memorable and offer glimmers of hope. It has to involve something other than crushing despair.

James Wyatt: Early on, Rob, Andy, and I sketched out some ideas about how death's impact on the game might vary over the course of the three tiers of play. At the lowest levels of the game, we figured, death could very well mean making a new character. When you've only played a character for a couple of levels, you're not that attached to it yet. Making a new one isn't that terrible a price to pay for an encounter gone terribly wrong. By the high heroic levels, and certainly the paragon tier, death comes with a more significant cost. It means stopping your adventure for the day, paying the price, and possibly story-based implications, up to and including failing a mission. At epic levels, though, death might become a speed bump. The consequences of failure in an encounter or an adventure might be much more significant than the life or death of a single character. When the fate of the world or even multiple planes hangs in the balance, fates far worse than death can await characters who fail.

RH: Despite our intentions, the earliest 4th Edition death mechanics erred on the side of dispelling all of death's threat. We actually ran playtests in which no one died. That was mainly because we'd wimped out in our design, and the only way a dying character could really die was if the DM actively targeted the character to finish him or her off. Of course, that wasn't a style of play that anyone could become comfortable with. We couldn't make character death a game element the DM had to execute intentionally that way. We'd be forcing an unpalatable choice between hurt feelings and a lack of dramatic tension.

Character death in D&D has to come as a natural and even expected consequence of taking massive amounts of damage. The system needs to roll you toward that endpoint. Death mechanics in 3E had a decent handle on that. We couldn't be satisfied with a system that failed to improve on 3E.

JW: All of our various stabs at mechanics were aimed at a single goal. As Rob pointed out, some aspects of 3E's death mechanics had handled the goal well. What we wanted was a specific dynamic at the table—an atmosphere when a character takes enough damage to go below 0 hit points.

The entire group of players takes a breath and holds it. Things get tense. Everyone shifts into emergency mode.

Characters do their best and most heroic things at these moments.

The group recognizes that something needs to be done, and quickly. Characters do their best and most heroic things at these moments.

There's a second part, though. When the character gets back up, there should be a sigh of relief. The worst is over, but the character isn't out of the woods yet. On the one hand, we don't want the punching clown effect, where one hit takes the newly revived character back down. On the other hand, we don't want the character back at full strength, ready to take on the world again.

Save or Die

RH: Third Edition's save-or-die effects were one of the major influences on our philosophy of character death in 4th Edition. We referred to any effect or attack that could take a PC out of the game for more than a round with a single die roll as a save-or-die effect, even when consequence wasn't death. Paralysis, confusion, stun, and charm—all these 3E effects frequently functioned as save-or-die effects. They made a player's enjoyment of an encounter, or an entire evening, hinge on a single saving throw.

I thought of save-or-die effects as one of the subtle game design problems that were capable of killing entire 3E campaigns. When one or two 3E PCs couldn't fail a particular saving throw without rolling a 1, and the other PCs in the group could hardly make that same save, campaigns had a way of stuttering and halting. From the beginning of our work on 4th Edition, we knew that we weren't going to use save-or-die effects that could take out PCs with a single die roll.

One of our earliest alternatives to save-or-die effects was a sort of track system. This system measured a character's progress toward various debilitating states by sliding characters up and down on numerous specific tracks. Each track's endpoint could result in a condition such as blinded, petrified, or dominated.

The track system ended up working very badly for conditions. That didn't prevent us from attempting to use it for death and dying. For a while, the phrase "I'm on the death track" meant that your PC was sliding toward doom.

A death-track system never had fans, but it at least knocked us out of thinking only in terms of negative hit points that dropped by one each round. That was a habit surprisingly hard to break. And much later, the track mechanics found a decent home in the disease rules.

It's the type of miraculous comeback that fantasy fans expect from their heroes.

Fighting the Negatives

RH: One of the reasons we tried so hard to make the track mechanics work was some designers thought that using negative hit points was unnecessarily complex. Players didn't need to be bothered with negative math. During several phases of design, we were consequently using systems that stopped tracking hit points when characters dropped to 0.

I was never convinced by the arguments against negative hit points. As we tried multiple systems that avoided negative numbers, I became entirely persuaded that a hit-point system should keep on using those same hit points to track the possibility of death. The final rules for dying at negative hit points equal to your bloodied value are exactly what I wanted.

Characters seldom die this way. However, if you're caught in too many breath weapons, or that scary brute crits you, you just might die from losing too many hit points. That can happen much faster than you can fail three death saving throws.

Save Against Death

JW: Speaking from personal experience, when you're having an off night with saving throws, it doesn't matter whether you fail your death saving throw or the one against the ongoing acid damage from the black dragon's bite attack. Six of one death, half-a-dozen of the other . . .

RH: The move away from the condition tracks led to organizing the game around effects that lasted a round or that lasted until the PC made a save. We saw that the saving throw worked and was a fun way for a player to rid a character of a condition. That made me sure we could use the saving throw to keep track of how long PCs hang on while dying. And better yet, we also used it to give PCs a chance to get back into the fight even if no one managed to heal them.

There's always hope for a dying PC. Even when your character is dying, the death saving throw you make at the end of your turn has at least a 1 in 20 chance of getting you back on your feet. As a result, a player stays involved with the game even when his or her PC is down.

This has everything to do with the psychology of victory over incredible odds. Victory after you've been dying and failed a death saving throw or two is even sweeter than an easy win. It's the type of miraculous comeback that fantasy fans expect from their heroes.

JW: The death saving throw system works well within the framework of the goals we set for ourselves. When a character drops, a very scary timer starts ticking that really does create the sense of emergency I was talking about before.

When you get back up, you typically have enough hit points to survive another hit, because healing starts from 0. Those negative hit points don't count against you. But your failed death saving throws are a black mark on your character sheet until you take a rest. If you do go down again in the same fight, you could be in trouble.

One less obvious factor is that healing is a limited resource in 4th Edition. Cure light wounds spells in potions or wands meant healing never could be as limited in 3E. When I finish a fight and realize it took three-quarters of my healing surges, it feels like a much tougher fight than the one that ate up ten wand charges in my last 3E game. And when I go into a fight with only one or two surges left, I play a lot more cautiously. I know that I could drop and not be able to get up.

Coming Back

RH: James mentioned before that epic adventurers occasionally face consequences worse than death. When epic characters fail, it's not necessarily those characters themselves who die. Instead, the consequence for epic failure can be that big parts of the world the player characters were trying to protect end up dead. And bringing them back to life isn't as simple as using a ritual called Raise Dead.

JW: Whatever way it happens, death is inevitable. Sooner or later, player characters die. Then the game needs to have an elegant and believable way to handle it.

Coming back from the dead was punishing in past editions—from losing a point of Constitution to losing a level. The logical consequence of that punishment is that players preferred making up a new character to raising the dead one. In that environment, character death means you can kiss your campaign's story continuity good-bye. Or you can welcome a new character named Bob II who's virtually identical to poor, deceased Bob.

The Raise Dead ritual is the normal means by which characters return from death in 4th Edition. We couldn't find a good reason to keep resurrection and true resurrection in the game, so we just raised the price of Raise Dead for higher-level characters to ensure that it remains relevant as characters advance levels. Raise Dead is also a ritual that takes 8 hours, so it definitely means that the party is taking an extended rest. That could have its own consequences in the adventure.

The ritual also comes with a "death penalty" that's like a negative level in 3E. You take a -1 penalty on just about every d20 roll you make, but that penalty goes away after three milestones. It lasts long enough to make sure you wish you hadn't died, but not so long as to severely hamper you or make you wish you'd just made a new character.

For epic-level characters, though, it can still be true that death is just a speed bump, at least once each day. Most epic destinies give characters some way to cheat death. This led to that choice phrase in those epic destinies, "Once per day, when you die," in which I personally take great delight.

The paladin's gift of life power (level 22 utility) can also bring a character back in the middle of a fight. I'm sure that's not the only epic-level power we're going to publish to allow instant resurrection.

About the Authors

Rob Heinsoo led the design of the 4th Edition D&D Roleplaying Game, and currently serves as a Senior Designer for Wizards of the Coast Roleplaying R&D. His 4th Edition design credits include *Martial Power*™ and the *Forgotten Realms® Player's Guide*. His other game designs include *Three-Dragon Ante*™ and *Inn Fighting*™.

James Wyatt is the D&D Design Manager for Wizards of the Coast Roleplaying R&D. He was one of the lead designers for 4th Edition D&D and the primary author of the 4th Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide®*. He was one of the designers of the *Eberron® Campaign Setting*, and is the author of several Eberron novels.

Game Shame

BY SHELLY MAZZANOBLE

I HAVE THIS FRIEND we'll call Nate.

Nate is a successful attorney who owns a home with a view of Puget Sound, has a cute girlfriend, two dogs, and volunteers for the organization Big Brothers Big Sisters. But Nate keeps a dark, ugly secret. He's been playing D&D for years.

He's the Dungeon Master for a group of six. He's got more dice than all the storage rooms on the Vegas strip. His books go back to 1st edition. He still finds himself humming the theme song from the old D&D cartoon series. Yet no one, outside his group of six, knows he plays Dungeons & Dragons®.

I know this about Nate only because he knows where I work and apparently feels safe divulging his secret to me. But Nate will not talk about D&D in public. If you call to ask him something about D&D and he is not alone he will pretend you are a telemarketer and hang up on you. He keeps his D&D paraphernalia in a locked, fireproof filing cabinet. He keeps the key to said cabinet locked in another cabinet.

You might assume Nate's non-D&D friends are reminiscent of the meathead jocks portrayed in a John Hughes movies from the 80s. Will they give him a wedgie and scalpful of noogies if they found out his secret? Unlikely. His friends skip work to wait in line for *The Dark Knight* tickets. They debate (in the most gentlemanly and nonsexist way possible) the hotness factors of the women on *Battlestar Galactica*. They have been known to spend entire weekends "on tour" with their Rock Band. Yet, at the risk of being "exposed," Nate once flipped an entire table over during his D&D game, sending minis, pencils and dungeon tiles soaring across his dining room and commanded everyone to "destroy the evidence!" because he thought he heard a car in the driveway.

"I don't want anyone to know, okay?" he tells me.

Okay, I guess. But I have to ask. Which group looks weirder—the ones sitting around the dining room table talking or the ones standing on their sofas, playing plastic mini instruments, and pretending to be in Motorhead?

I know my view is skewed as I spend the bulk of my day with people who talk about, think about, and play D&D on a regular basis. At my office, people think you're weird if you don't play D&D.

Didn't Harry Potter make fantasy palatable to everyone? Are we not evolved enough as a society to concede Dungeons & Dragons is a perfectly acceptable hobby?

"Absolutely not!" Nate answers. "And if you're writing about this, don't forget I can and will sue you."

If Nate is right then more "Nates" are exactly what this hobby needs. Plenty of good people like Nate play D&D everyday. Tax paying, smart, socially conscious, well-mannered people! Why should what they do in their well-deserved spare time cause them embarrassment?

"What do you think will happen if someone found out you play D&D?" I asked Nate.

First he tells me to lower my voice. Then he admits, "They'll treat me different. D&D is not a socially acceptable hobby."

"Cannibalism, hitting cats with BB guns, and public urination are not socially acceptable," I argued. "D&D is a game."

What do you think will happen if someone found out you play D&D?

But it was no use. Nate has actually broken out in hives over someone asking what he liked to do for fun. This saddens me, as Nate can't be the only one out there experiencing game shame. But if he's not willing to represent D&D players, someone else has to. Someone like me. That's right. Me!

What would happen if I did all my normal activities and frequented my usual haunts while bringing my not-so-secret pastime to the people? Unlock your character sheets and dice, Nates of the world! Quit hiding in your bunkers of self-imposed shame! I will make the world a safer place for you!

I gathered up all the D&D gear I could find around the office and prepared to spend the next month literally wearing my hobby on my sleeve.

We had tons of shirts around the office so I even sent a couple home to my parents.

"Oh honey," Mom said, calling to thank me. "Do you really wear this? Outside?"

"I'm wearing it right now!" I told her. "I'm bringing D&D to the masses!"

This disturbs Judy a great deal, since she likes to believe I tromp around Seattle in Chanel suits and loafers.

"Couldn't you just hand out those cute little pink dice?"

"Dragons aren't supposed to be cute, Mom," I tell her.

"Puff was cute," she counters, and I concede. Puff was pretty adorable.

Mission #1

Location: Nordstrom Cosmetic Counter
Gear: Dice bag and bounty of dice

Seems every beauty product I own is A) stored behind a glass case and B) needs to be sold to me by a woman wearing a white lab coat. I load up my favorite dice bag with my keys, cell phone, debit card, and dice and meet up with my girlfriend, Kristina.

"Cute ... satchel?" she says, examining the polka dotted satin pouch. "What's all that jiggling in there?"

"My dice," I say, explaining my true motives.

"Fine," she said. "But if someone beats you up in the parking lot, I'll be in the car."

As we approach the counter, our sucker lights must turn on because the salesgirl is all over us with lotions, potions, powders, and brushes.

"You're in luck!" she squeals. "It's gift with purchase time!"

"All I need is eyeliner," I say, trying to run interference.

"Oh pooey," the girl says, puffing out her perfectly lined lips. "That's not enough to qualify for a free gift."

"Oh well," I say, trying to sound disappointed. I make a big production out of pulling my debit card out of the dice bag much to the mortification of Kristina. I accidentally on purpose grab a handful of dice and throw them on the glass counter.

"Oh pooey," I say, tapping into my theater major background. "There go my dice!"

Kristina rolls her eyes and busies herself with some lipstick samples. She was part of my informal focus group when I was writing Confessions, so she's familiar with my research tactics.

The salesgirl rushes to my aid, plucking misshapen dice from the polished tiled floor and dropping them back into my dice bag. A d12 catches her eye.

"What is this?"

"Don't ask!" Kristina laughs. "It's ridiculous."

I'm pretty sure she's talking about my acting skills, which, admittedly, might be a little rusty. By now, she's sporting a smeared ring of awful red lipstick nowhere near her lips.

"This is ridiculous?" I ask. "You look like a blow-up doll."

To the salesgirl I say, "It's for a game."

"Like Yahtzee?" she asks.

"Not quite. Dungeons & Dragons."

"Dungeons and—" she repeats and then jumps back like someone jammed eye liner in her eye. "People still play that?"

"Leave her alone!" Kristina commands. "I want my gift with purchase!"

"Sure! Lots of people play D&D," I pointed to Kristina. "Even she does."

"If you do decide to dress up in costumes come back and see me," she says. "I'm really good at fairy makeup."

Score: 1 for cosmetics girl, 1 for Shelly, 1 for Kristina's husband

Chainmail bustiers, giant, magical mascara wands, and masterwork skinny jeans...

Kristina leaps off the stool and charges me like an orc in drag. "No I don't! Not that there's anything wrong with it."

"Do you act it out?" the salesgirl asks. "Like in costumes and with funny voices?"

I want to tell her YES! Of course! Chainmail bustiers, giant, magical mascara wands, and masterwork skinny jeans, but that would defeat the purpose of my experiment. The point is to bring D&D to the mainstream. Not get us kicked out of Nordstrom.

"Sadly, no," I told her. "It's really just hanging out with your friends, sitting around a table, making up adventures for characters who are way cooler than we'll ever be."

Maybe she's trying not to lose a sale but to our surprise the salesgirls says, "Sounds more interesting than my usual Friday night. Maybe I should learn how to play."

"No way," Kristina says. "Is she a plant?"

I give the salesgirl some tips and Kristina and I pay for our purchases. She even gives me the free gift I didn't qualify for.

Mission #2

Location: Friend's House for Dinner Party
Gear: D&D Logo "baby doll" T-shirt (circa 2006)

My friend and co-worker invited me to dinner at her house. There'd be eight of us, all women, who were ripe for the D&D pickings. My t-shirt inevitably sparked lively conversation (mostly because everyone else was dressed up.)

"You know," one of the girls said in the tone of voice used only when you're about to unleash someone else's dirt, "Kevin still plays D&D."

I don't know Kevin but everyone else was appropriately shocked. They burst into incredulous laughter and a chorus of "No ways!" I even heard an "Ew!"

"I believe it," the girl I liked least said. "Maybe if he came out of his mom's basement and stopped pretending to be a hobbit he would find a girlfriend."

Wow. I don't know what I found more shocking. The fact that she managed to include so many stereotypes in one sentence or that she did it in front of two people she knew worked for the game's publisher.

"Careful," I said. "You're in mixed company."

"Oh please," she scoffed. "You're both in marketing. It's not like girls actually play that game anyway."

Now it was our turn to laugh.

"Remind me to give you a really good book," my co-worker told her, winking at me.

"And while you're at it, give Kevin my phone number," I said.

Score: 0 for mean girl, 1 for Shelly, 1/2 for Kevin

Mission #3

Location: Trader Joe's
Gear: D&D Tote Bag

The worst thing you can do at Trader Joe's is not bring your own grocery bag. I always forget and subsequently leave the store in my non-hybrid automobile, feeling like a big pile of compost.

Today I remembered because my D&D tote would serve two purposes. After stocking up on Soy Nuggets and roasted pepper hummus, I surveyed the cashiers to determine whose mind looks ready for opening. It's a tough call, as everyone here looks ready to hug you, regardless of what you're wearing. I settle on a young female with braids, an eyebrow piercing, and faux hawk because she resembles the half-elf in *The Player's Handbook*.

She was friendly and chatty and made me feel like I single-handedly saved the environment by bringing in my own bag. And, score! She got even more excited when she saw what it said.

"Totally rad!" she shrieked. "I love vintage clothing."

"Vintage?"

"My friend just got this awesome Smashing Pumpkins shirt from Goodwill," she goes on. "She would totally dig this."

I debate whether it's worth it to tell her I got my bag last year. New. And if Smashing Pumpkins is vintage than I'm . . . too old to fight with her. I leave the store feeling like a big pile of compost.

Score: 1 for teen cashier, 0 for Shelly, -12 for anyone born in the 70's

Mission #4

Location: Animal Shelter
Gear: D&D 4th Edition Logo T-shirt

On Saturdays I volunteer at a local animal shelter. I'm a dog volunteer, which is much different than a cat volunteer. Cats are great and all, but when you sign up you must choose your alliance. But sometimes I break barriers and sneak into the cattery for a little peace and quiet.

Nancy, a forty-ish woman dangerously close to being a stereotypical "cat lady" was also volunteering.

She barely looked up from her Nora Roberts novel, but acknowledged my presence by blowing the apparently now-soiled air loudly through her nose and moving her left hand back and forth in front of her face. The twelve cats in kennels meowed in agreement.

"Something smells like wet dog," she said.

"Hmm . . . that's odd coming from an animal shelter on a rainy day. Maybe Animal Control can look into that."

If it's one thing Nancy apparently hates more than dogs, it's sarcasm. Without looking up from the pages of her book she asked if I was interested in adopting a cat.

"Oh no," I said, "I still have plenty of kibble left at home." Ha ha!

I was clearly kidding, but judging from Nancy's expression I thought maybe I had crossed the line. Her mean, gold eyes were boring a hole into my chest, presumably where my cat-loving heart should be.

"Dungeons & Dragons?" she asked.

I felt the most enthusiasm I ever had in Nancy's presence. Nancy knows D&D!

"Yes!" I said. "Do you play too?"

Nancy is so taken aback, Nora Roberts hit the floor. This is apparently more shocking than the whole cat-as-kibble comment. "Are you kidding? Of course not! Way to wave your freak flag."

Now it's my turn to be taken aback. Did this woman actually say, "freak flag"? Me-freakin'-yow.

"Nancy," I begin. "Your shirt says, 'You can never have enough cats.' While my flag may be gently waving in the breeze, your freakiness is filled with helium and riding down the Thanksgiving Day parade of crazy."

I leave Nancy to lick her wounds but not before explaining you can, in fact, have too many cats.

Score: 0 for Nancy, 1 for Shelly, 1 for each of the cats in kennels at risk of going home with Nancy

...your freakiness is filled with helium and riding down the Thanksgiving Day parade of crazy.

Mission #5

Location: Green Lake
Gear: D&D Logo Skull Cap

Even on not so nice days this very popular walking spot is hopping. I have a foster dog, so I take this opportunity to bring her—and D&D—out for a stroll. We met up with my friend, Marin.

"What's with the hat?" she asks. "It's 60 degrees."

"My t-shirts are dirty," I explain. Marin is a librarian and therefore familiar with researching articles so she barely gives it a second thought.

Ruby, the black lab, gets us noticed, but her black lab charm gets all the attention. No one bothers to look up from those soulful black eyes to notice my sweaty, D&D branded head.

Finally an older woman interrupts her power-walk to give Ruby and I some kudos. She's zeroed in on my head so I focus on my spiel about the animal shelter, hoping she's making the connection between "girl who plays D&D" and "girl who spends Saturday afternoons walking orphan dogs around a popular Seattle lake."

I must really be hammering this whole "D&D players equals good community members" message home because she looks like she's about to pull me into her bosom and embrace me. Instead she lunges forward and swats me upside the head, knocking my hat to the pavement.

"Lady! What the...?"

Marin and Ruby are greatly amused by this turn of events.

"I'm so sorry!" the woman says. "I thought that thing was a spider!"

"That thing was my hat!" I say, picking up my cap and stuffing it in my pocket. "It says Dungeons & Dragons, not 'Aim Here!'"

She apologized a few more times and power-walked out of sight.

"It doesn't look like a spider," my friend tells me. "She just wanted to hit you."

If I had a dollar...

Score: 1 for the power-walker, 0 for Shelly, 0 for Ruby

Conclusion

Sadly, I lost a d4 at Nordstrom, a teenager made me feel old, and I was publically assaulted by a skinny, middle-aged stranger at least three decades my senior. Worse, I don't think I made the real world any safer for Nate. (Especially not at Greenlake.)

But the more I think about it, the more I wonder, did I need to? The most consistent reaction I got was no reaction. Either no one noticed my ill-fitting advertisements or they were indifferent to it. Just as I'm about to call my research inconclusive I get an email from my mom.

"We've decided to conduct our own experiment." She attaches pictures of herself standing outside of Saks 5th Avenue, my dad having lunch at Ruby Tuesdays, back to Mom again in the frozen food section of Price Chopper, and then Dad one more time in his living room watching football with his "mainstream" buddies. In every photo, they're wearing the D&D t-shirts I sent.

"We couldn't tell if people were looking at us funny because we were always dressed alike, or if it was because we had dragons on our shirts. Dad met a couple of college boys who said they'd be glad to roll up a character for him. They even bought us lattes! We don't know what "rolling up" means but Dad is meeting up with them on Friday! I hope it doesn't involved drugs. Love you!"

We should all be waving our freak flags...

Hmm. Perhaps I need to reassess my hypothesis. People without ties to D&D are very much like cats: They can be indifferent, aloof, and oblivious. But people who do have a connection to D&D are very much like black labs: generous, welcoming, friendly, and passionate.

Nancy was right. We should all be waving our freak flags if for no other reason than to attract the flags of other "freaks." And if on some remote chance someone does think you're weird, or lame, or socially inept, let them. They're probably at least one cat over the limit.

About the Author
Shelly Mazzanoble does plenty of things she should be ashamed of, but playing D&D is not one of them.

Dungeon Mastering Your Living Forgotten Realms Game

BY CHRIS TULACH

LAST MONTH, we discussed organizing your first Living Forgotten Realms game. This month, we'll talk about your first session as a DM for Living Forgotten Realms. What's different? How easy is it? How much prep time do I need? Read on!

The first advantage for Living Forgotten Realms adventures is they're light on time commitment. Clocking in at about a 4-hour play experience, they make a great fit for one night of gaming. You can also play two in a row on a long weekend session. You don't have to worry about integrating the adventure with a long-term campaign, as each adventure begins and ends in one session.

Preparing your adventure is also easy. All the information you need to run the adventure is included right in the document. If it's your first time being a DM for Living Forgotten Realms, you'll want to read the introductory information in the first couple of pages of the adventure. Pay particular attention to the section entitled "Important DM Information", as it gives you some great advice on running your game.

Each adventure for Living Forgotten Realms is designed for a level range of characters (typically a four level spread). There are two versions of most encounters in an adventure: a low-level and a high-level version. If you know the group you're running through the adventure beforehand, you might want to check with them to see what version they want to play. This should help to cut down on prep time.

All Living Forgotten Realms adventures contain the stat blocks you need to run the adventure without having to refer to rulebooks. In addition, all tactical encounters have a map layout as a reference and give you a list of *Dungeon Tiles* used in the creation of the map. With the exception of the *Player's Handbook*, you won't need any other books to help prepare or run the adventure.

The biggest difference between a game of Living Forgotten Realms and your home game is treasure distribution. Since characters can travel from group to group, special treasure distribution rules are in effect for the campaign. At the end of the adventure is the rewards summary page. Make sure you read this over carefully and understand how rewards are given out in Living Forgotten Realms, since it differs from what you would do in a home game.

You'll want to set aside about an hour to prepare a Living Forgotten Realms adventure. Some adventures can be prepared in less time, but an hour gives you an opportunity to read through the adventure, take some notes, and make small modifications (if necessary) to account for your group.

In order to document your game, each adventure comes with a tracking sheet. When you finish your game, fill out the appropriate information on the tracking sheet (instructions to do so are in the rewards summary of the adventure). Depending on who ordered the event, you either hand this tracking sheet over to your event organizer for reporting or you log into your profile online and report the event yourself.

In addition, most adventures come with story award certificates for the players. Hand these out as appropriate when you finish your game. While story awards rarely have game-affecting benefits, they serve as reminders of important deeds done and may come into play as future adventures are released.

The serial nature of Living Forgotten Realms adventures means that you can easily schedule an evening's worth of play without worrying about having to tie it back to a long-term campaign—the RPGA does that work for you! You also have an ever-growing library of adventures to try out that span the breadth of Faerûn and all kinds of different adventure themes, so there's something available for everyone. Give Living Forgotten Realms a try and you'll have a great way to play D&D without some of the challenges that make up a regular home game!

Next time, we'll talk about DMing your first game at a public event, such as a game day or convention. Until then, keep your defenders in the front!

About the Author

Originally thought to have been raised from a humble Midwestern family, Chris Tulach actually fell to Earth in a meteorite-shaped capsule flung from a planet far outside our galaxy. While under the yellow rays of Sol, Chris's nerdity far surpasses that of any normal human. Using this precious gift only for good, he has recently become the RPGA® Content Manager, responsible for the development and deployment of Dungeons & Dragons® organized play programs.

What Happens in Vegas...

by Bill Slavicsek

A couple of weeks ago, I met up with members of my original gaming group for a weekend of D&D. These are the guys I first discovered the game with, the guys who were there week in and week out as we explored dungeons, battled monsters, and learned to love roleplaying. I was the Dungeon Master back then, and I was the DM for this event as well. We gathered in Las Vegas, coming from states far and wide, including Washington, California, New York, New Jersey, and Oklahoma. We rented a suite in the Mirage, and we gamed from morning to evening, taking a couple of breaks along the way to venture out in search of restaurants.

To prepare for the event, I made use of *D&D Insider's* Character Builder to create and print out character sheets and power cards for all of the players. We're working through the bugs of this awesome gaming aid, but even with a few faults, it made preparation and play so much easier to accomplish. Creating characters will never be the same once we launch this application. As the day of the trip loomed closer, I collected all of the miniatures I was going to need to run the encounters—I'm still not sure what the people who examine luggage thought as they saw the armies of plastic monsters slide past the X-ray monitor as I passed through the airport checkpoint.

In Vegas, Rich, Paul, Curtis, John H., John C., and Scott all arrived on schedule. We also added Rich's son Ryan to the group, who was born, coincidentally, right before I first moved from the east coast to join TSR 16 years ago. Wow. Time flies ...

I ran the group through a couple of 1st-level encounters from *H1: Keep on the Shadowfell* just to warm them up and get them used to the new game mechanics. Then we dove into the deep end, advancing to 7th-level to take on the challenges within *H3: Pyramid of Shadows*. The action was fast and furious. The snacks were plentiful. The dice rolled high. The dice rolled low. And the bad jokes and puns, as always, were as bad and as hilarious as ever. There was also an amazing number of heroic moments, tense battles, amusing interactions, and spectacular deeds of daring-do. And the final battle of H3 was maybe the best encounter of an entire weekend full of great encounters. It was full of action and suspense, with near deaths, frustratingly fun villains, and cool interactions with the poster map. In the end, the adventurers were victorious and the villains were whupped real good—in short, we had a great weekend of D&D.

Thanks for joining me and making the weekend so much fun, guys! When can we do it again?

The Stowaway

If you're looking for something fun to read, I heartily recommend R.A. Salvatore and Geno Salvatore's *The Stowaway*. Set in the Forgotten Realms world, and guest-starring everybody's favorite drow ranger, *The Stowaway* follows the adventures of 12-year-old Maimun as he evades a demon and searches for answers along the Sword Coast. It's a fast and exciting read, and the ending left me—literally—wanting more of the story immediately. I can't wait for the next book in the series! Look for it wherever young adult novels are sold.

Weekend in the Realms

Speaking of the Forgotten Realms campaign, *Weekend in the Realms* is coming up later this month. Part of the new Living Forgotten Realms campaign from the RPGA, *Weekend* is a worldwide event that kicks the new living campaign into high gear. It features an exclusive mega-adventure called "Beneath Haunted Halls" designed by Matthew Sernett. The adventure is divided into three parts, and you can play one, two, or all three throughout the weekend, as well as participate in related D&D events at participating locations.

Weekend in the Realms happens on October 24–26. All organizers who have scheduled the event by October 8 will receive an event kit that comes complete with the special adventure. Organizers who schedule the event after that date receive an electronic version of the kit instead of a hard copy.

This event is a great way to get involved in the Living Forgotten Realms campaign. The exclusive, weekend-only adventure is tailored to low-level play and offers both new and existing Forgotten Realms fans a unique experience. Whatever your character accomplishes will follow him or her to other Living Forgotten Realms adventures.

Delve Night

Another new program from the RPGA launched recently, *D&D Delve Night*. Based on the legendary delve events we've run at GenCon and other conventions for years now, this monthly dungeon crawl re-creates the delve format that gets to the heart of a D&D adventure. It features ready-to-play encounters, including monster stats and room layouts that can be built using *D&D Dungeon Tiles*. Just bring a character of the appropriate level and leap into the action!

Delve Night provides a fun way to meet other D&D players without committing to a long campaign. It's specifically created to run in public locations, such as libraries and retail stores. And it's a great way for you to try out new character concepts and ideas with-

out changing your ongoing character in your home campaign.

This program is available to retailers and other public D&D play locations through the new Wizards Play Network (link). If you're not seeing the *Delve* in your area, ask your favorite retailer to participate. And take out a monster or two for me!

Staff Updates

Just when I think things have settled down, we go and shake things up by promoting people and hiring people. Go figure. I'm proud to announce the recent changes that have happened in my department ...

We've split the duties of my senior managers to spread out the workload and make room for a new member of my immediate staff. James Wyatt has accepted the position of Design Manager for D&D, and he now joins Chris Perkins (Creative Manager) and Andy Collins (Development Manager) as my key managers of all D&D game product. Along with this shake-up of the Design Team, Mike Mearls is moving over to handle the Lead Game Designer role, freeing Rob Heinsoo to fully concentrate on his duties as Senior Designer.

On the *D&D Insider* team, we've promoted Bart Carroll to Web Manager of the free portion of the D&D Website, where he'll serve as the "editor-in-chief" of all free elements and continue to work closely with Chris Youngs, who serves in the same role but for the subscription side of the site. We've also moved Chris Sims onto the team, to help keep the cool previews and constant magazine updates happening on a regular basis. Hmm ... or maybe Chris Perkins is trying to assemble the ultimate All-Chris Team. I wonder if Steve Winter and Bart will agree to change their names to make this happen?

We've also just hired Torah Cottrill to work with Kim Mohan to make sure that every product gets the final editing attention it deserves, and we've reabsorbed designer Matthew Sernett and developer Mike Donais from elsewhere in the organization. We're glad to have them back on our team!

Yup, my department continues to grow, and we're not done yet. Keep watching the Wizards' job site for other opportunities as they appear in the near future. I'm always looking for talented, enthusiastic people—maybe the next one I hire will be you!

Preview: Manual of the Planes

Before I sign off for another month, let me share something cool with you from the upcoming *Manual of the Planes*. Here are the stats for the demon lord Graz'zt and his terrible sword. This is just a small part of the entire Graz'zt entry, which also includes related paragon-tier and epic-tier villains for use with the demon lord.

Next time, *D&D Insider* should be completely in subscription mode. When that happens, I'll pull out all the stops and provide something really special as a thank you to the first subscribers. See you then!

Bill

Graz'zt

DEMONS AREN'T SUBTLE, BUT THEN EVERY RULE has its exception.

Graz'zt is the schemer of the Abyss, and he constantly plots against Demogorgon and Orcus from his realm of Azzagrat. Graz'zt uses seduction, guile, and trickery as his weapons, launching demonic hordes only after his intrigues leave enemies in disarray. Known also as the Dark Prince, Graz'zt appears and acts more human than other demon princes. However, he is capable of atrocities to rival even the most sadistic demons. Graz'zt has black skin, six small horns atop his head, and six digits on each hand.

Graz'zt was once a devil and a trusted advisor to Asmodeus, who charged Graz'zt with invading the Abyss and seizing the evil seed that created it (see "The Birth of the Abyss" sidebar, Monster Manual, page 52). Graz'zt's initial invasion was successful, and he managed to seize three layers of the Abyss. However, pressure from Orcus and Demogorgon stalled Graz'zt's descent toward the heart of evil. Graz'zt eventually rejected his heritage and turned the conquered territory into his own kingdom. Today, he is one of the most powerful demon princes. And whether he truly spurned the Nine Hells or is secretly colluding with Asmodeus is known only to Graz'zt. Regardless, that doesn't preclude a change of allegiances later.

Graz'zt cultivates an atmosphere of indolence and lassitude within his horrid palace. The outward decadence of his court masks the truth, though: The palace is a nexus of schemes that extend throughout the planes and across the centuries.

Wave of Sorrow **Level 30**

Wave of Sorrow is a massive, black greatsword that Graz'zt wields in one hand. The serrated blade undulates when wielded by the Dark Prince.

Lvl 30 +6 3,125,000 gp
Weapon: Greatsword
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +6d8 damage
Property: This weapon deals ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends) on a successful melee attack.

Power (At-Will ✦ Teleportation): Free Action.
Use this power when you hit an enemy with a melee attack or a close attack that uses this weapon. You teleport to a square adjacent to the target you hit.

Graz'zt	**Level 32 Solo Controller**
Medium elemental humanoid (demon)	XP 135,000
Initiative +27	**Senses** Perception +24; darkvision
HP 1,430	**Bloodied** 715
AC 48; **Fortitude** 45, **Reflex** 48, **Will** 48	
Immune charm; Resist 20 variable (3/encounter; see *Monster Manual,* page 282)	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 6, teleport 6	
Action Points 2	

Wave of Sorrow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid, Teleportation, Weapon**
Reach 2; +37 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage, and ongoing 10 acid (save ends), and Graz'zt teleports to an unoccupied square adjacent to the target.

Sorrow Cyclone (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Acid, Teleportation, Weapon**
Requires *Wave of Sorrow*; close burst 1; targets enemies; +37 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage, and ongoing 10 acid damage (save ends), and Graz'zt teleports to an unoccupied square adjacent to a creature hit by the attack.

Overwhelming Domination (standard; recharges when no enemy is dominated by Graz'zt) ✦ **Charm**
Ranged 20; targets two enemies; + 35 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends), and saving throws against this effect take a -4 penalty. Graz'zt can force a creature he has dominated to use encounter attack powers. A creature dominated by Graz'zt counts as his ally and is not considered dazed (as per the dominated condition) for the purpose of flanking. Aftereffect: The target takes a -4 penalty to Will defense until the end of the encounter.

Unholy Blight (standard, recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Area burst 5 within 10; targets enemies only; +35 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 10 damage, and the target is weakened until the end of Graz'zt's next turn.

Change Shape (minor; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**
Graz'zt can alter his physical form to appear as an attractive Medium humanoid of any race or gender (see "Change Shape," *Monster Manual*, page 280).

Combat Advantage
Graz'zt deals an extra 4d6 damage against any target he has combat advantage against.

Vicious Twist (free, when Graz'zt hits a creature with an attack that has the weapon keyword; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
That creature takes an extra 20 damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** All
Skills Arcana +27, Bluff +32, Diplomacy +32, History +27, Insight +29, Intimidate +32	
Str 27 (+24)	**Dex** 33 (+27) **Wis** 27 (+24)
Con 22 (+22)	**Int** 22 (+22) **Cha** 33 (+27)
Equipment Wave of Sorrow	

Graz'zt Tactics

In combat, Graz'zt usually uses *overwhelming domination* first. He makes enemies into allies and then sets them up to help flank opponents with him.

Due to Graz'zt's *overwhelming domination* power, one or more characters will likely be dominated through much of the fight against Graz'zt. If your players are amenable, allow a person to retain control of his or her character if the player agrees to fight faithfully on Graz'zt's behalf.

Graz'zt is elusive on the battlefield, moving from flank to flank, teleporting when appropriate. If the PCs are intent on maintaining their distance, then Graz'zt employs unholy blight. If the battle turns against Graz'zt, he flees and leaves his allies to die.

Graz'zt Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana or Religion check.

DC 20: Graz'zt is the Dark Prince, a demonic patron of tyrants and despots. Evil schemers swear obeisance to him.

DC 25: Graz'zt's greatest rival is Demogorgon, and Graz'zt would like nothing better than to destroy the two-headed demon prince and claim the title of "Prince of Demons."

DC 30: Graz'zt rules a three-tiered realm in the Abyss known as Azzagrat. Within the twisted streets of this landscape dwell hordes of demons and deadly elementals.

DC 35: Graz'zt was once an archdevil in the service of Asmodeus. Graz'zt was sent by Asmodeus to retrieve the shard of evil embedded in the heart of the Abyss, and though he did not succeed, Graz'zt did conquer three levels of that plane. He established his own kingdom there, rejecting Asmodeus to instead reign over his newly conquered territory.

DC 40: Graz'zt carries a massive, serrated greatsword called *Wave of Sorrow*. He wields the sword in one hand, and the blade moves like a wave when he brandishes it. In addition to fighting with the sword, Graz'zt is a master of dominating his enemies, whom he directs to fight on his behalf.